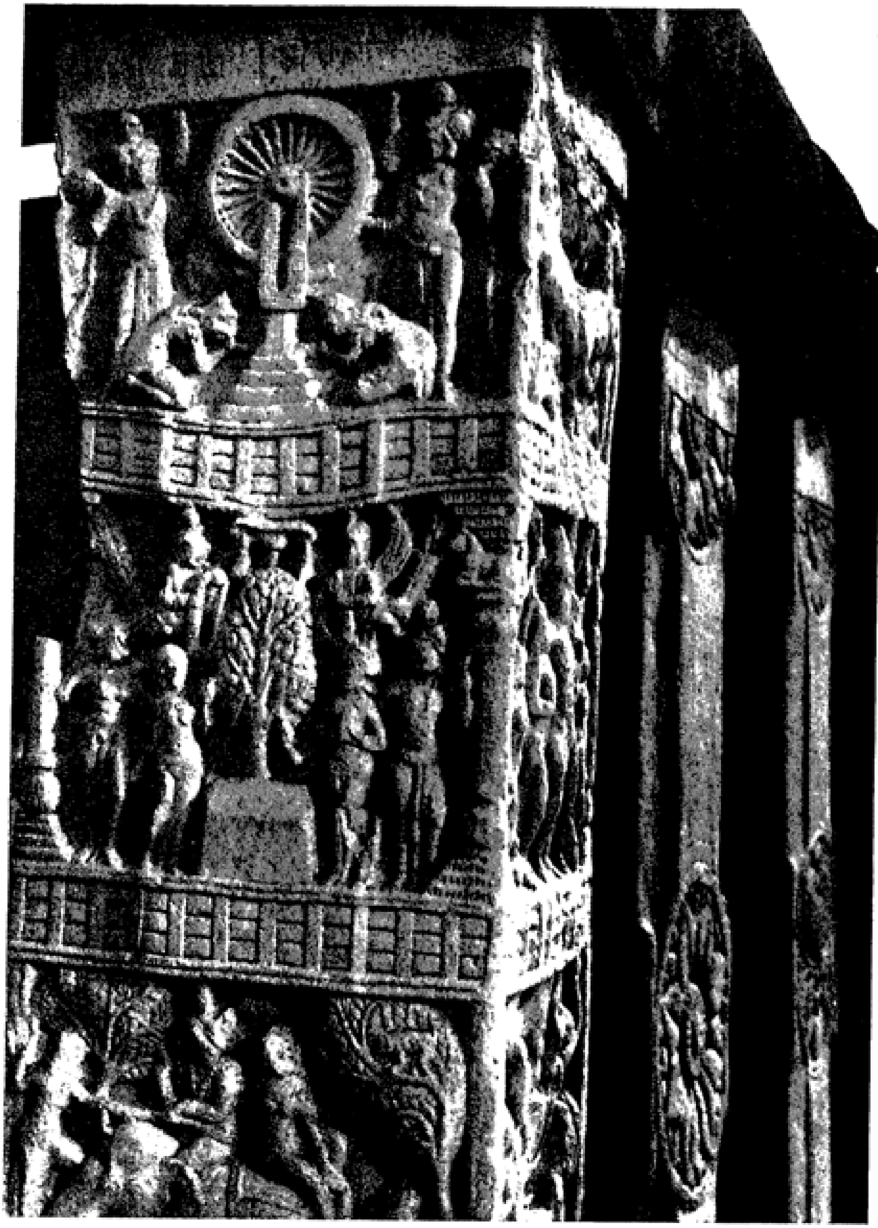
THE BUDDHA
AND FIVE AFTER-CENTURIES



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

WORSHIP OF THE UNSEEN AND UNIMAGED
(The Primitive Buddhist Worship)
From Sanchi Sculpture

THE

BUDDHA

AND

FIVE AFTER-CENTURIES

by

SUKUMAR DUTT, M.A., PH.D.,
author of *Early Buddhist Monachism*

LUZAC & COMPANY LIMITED
46 GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON, W.1.
1957

Printed in Great Britain
at the Burleigh Press, *Lewins Mead,* Bristol

To

SAVITRI DUTT

in appreciation
of all the loving help she has given
in writing this book
and in
living my life

FOREWORD

I am very glad to write this foreword to the new book by Doctor Dutt which comes to light several years after his *Early Buddhist Monachism* which met with much praise and appreciation.

Buddhist research has now become very difficult on account of the many problems it raises. The main points of Buddhist evolution are still obscure to us for the multiplicity of currents of thoughts and of sects whose main principles or ideas we still insufficiently know. Many of our ideas need revision and some problems should be studied anew, as for instance M. Bareau did concerning the traditional account of the division of Buddhism into sects. But Buddhism is a living religion,—not only a living religion, but one that gives signs of a fresh vitality and impulse. The interest it arouses in the West is not merely scientific, but also spiritual: it appears that Buddhism has something to say in these troubled times when so many moral and religious values are collapsing.

Doctor Dutt has for many years pondered on the fundamental ideas of Buddhism; he has tried to visualize its early evolution; he discusses in this book some crucial problems like that of the ' Councils ' and of the origins of the Mahāyāna.

When we deal with a religion, there are many points of approach,—a philological approach concerning the texts and their validity or transmission, or an historical one that aims at reconstructing the succession in the evolution of the ideas and the impact of social surroundings on them, or a philosophical one intending to visualize the essential teachings, or a spiritual one of pure interior adhesion to its principles. Except for a few points that are ascertainable and positive, there is in the study of every religion a great deal that is subjective, but nonetheless interesting, as the reflection in our spirit of some *realia*, remaining dead and unconvincing unless they are separated and so enlivened by us.

Doctor Dutt has written this new work with the same zeal and accuracy as we praised in his previous work. He views

the problems chiefly historically, and, even if some of his conclusions cannot always be certain,—and the time to arrive at certainty with regard to them is not yet,—he opens new fields for discussion. But this is presently what we want: to consider under new perspectives unsolved or doubtful problems,—each of us to advance his own theories, leaving them to further research to sift and evaluate.

The book of Doctor Dutt is the work of a scholar,—chiefly of a Pali scholar; but it can be read with profit and interest by all those,—and nowadays they are many,—whose attention is attracted by the Religion of the Sākyamuni. The author is well acquainted with the fundamental texts and the European literature, chiefly in English, bearing on the subject. The book is the result of many years of painstaking work and meditation and the reader will find in it a clear and diligent *aperçu* of the many currents of thought and clashes of ideas which led Buddhism to that catholicism which was later on achieved by the Mahāyāna.

Il Presidente,
Istituto Italiano per il
Medio ed Estremo Oriente,
ROMA.

G. TUCCI.

November, 1955.

PREFACE

The present work is an attempt to trace the many-sided developments of Buddhism in India during the first five centuries before the rise of the *Mahāyāna*. The attempt, so far as I know, is a pioneer one.

The crucial difficulty of historical dealing with pre-*Mahāyāna* (named *Hīnayāna*) Buddhism is that the source materials are chiefly the scriptural legends. They are covered by the orthodox theory of *Buddha-vacana*, which rules out the idea of sequence and succession, of growth and development, and presents the system of religion, much like Minerva in the Greek myth, as emerging from the Founder's mind full-grown and complete. The theory, however, is rebutted by the internal evidence of the scripture itself in which the doctrines and rules point unmistakably to different strata and different stages of growth. It is only through careful, even meticulous, evaluation of the legends, distinguishing between the earlier and the later in them, that it is possible to cut a way to an historical perspective.

Modern scholarship does not subscribe to the orthodox theory, but the tendency to accepting the legends at their face-value persists. It leads to wrong conclusions, and in the history of Buddhism, as well as of Ancient India, it has actually led to some oft-repeated fictions, conveyed uncritically from book to book. The historicity of the so-called 'Buddhist Councils', the place of the Theravāda and its Pali canon in the *Hīnayāna*, Asoka's actual relationship to Buddhism, the evolution of the *Mahāyāna*, etc., are some of the topics of vital importance in Buddhist history on which more light can be thrown if the legends are more closely inspected. In pursuit of my object in the present work which is no more than to indicate the alignment, the landmarks and the stages in the progress of Buddhism through its first five centuries, I have treated the legendary sources more critically than the practice hitherto has been. I can only hope that

the line I have followed is really the right one for historical presentation.

Prof. G. Tucci of Rome, who contributes the Foreword, got interested in my venture almost by accident. It was through his good graces that I was enabled to proceed to Rome, with a scholarship granted by the Government of Italy, in November 1953 and, during the six months I spent in Italy, to go over the whole manuscript under Prof. Tucci's supervision and guidance in the University of Rome, profiting by his keen-sighted criticism and very valuable suggestions. In my tale of indebtedness his is the first name I have to mention.

The late Prof. B. M. Barua, a fellow-student with me at college years ago, who was Professor of Pali in the University of Calcutta, justly renowned for his vast learning in Pali and Indian antiquities, comes next in my tale. I have cherished recollections of two nights in January 1947, when he came to Delhi to preside over the Buddhist Section of the All-India Philosophical Congress of that year, and, hearing of the work I had undertaken, came to stay with me for two nights, putting off all other engagements and forgetting all preoccupations. As I read to him out of the manuscript just begun, he kept listening with intent interest from evening right up to midnight, congratulated me on what he thought to be the originality of my approach and urged me to persevere at all costs. My deepest regret is that he is no more to see the work complete and finally appraise it, for he died about a year after this our last meeting.

Among others who have laid me under a debt of gratitude, I wish to mention Prof. V. S. Agrawala, now of the University of Banaras, who was most patiently and painstakingly helpful in revising the typescript and inserting the Sanskrit passages in the footnotes; Mr. Devaprasad Guha, sometime Professor of Pali at Rangoon, and Mr. Sukumar Sen-Gupta who gladly helped me in looking up references in Pali literature in the library of the Calcutta University; Mr. R. N. Rahul, my ex-pupil, now studying at Harvard, who was cheerfully at my beck and call whenever I needed a book to be fetched from a library; and, lastly, my wife Savitri Dutt, to whom the book is dedicated and from whom I received not only constant

support, but also efficient collaboration in understanding some difficult texts of Buddhist Sanskrit.

For the varied and miscellaneous studies on which the present work is based, I had to lay under contribution the Central Archæological Library in New Delhi, the Calcutta University Library (Pali section) and the Library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta. My work was made smooth and pleasant by the kindliness and courtesy of the officers of these libraries to whom I am grateful, especially to Mr. D. R. Sharma, then in charge of the Central Archæological Library of New Delhi and Mr. L. G. Parab, his successor in office.

I am keenly conscious of the little done by me and the vast undone. But the study of Buddhism cannot be said yet to have passed out of the exploratory stage, and to all genuine scholars must be welcome suggestions, from whatever quarter, for exploration of new ways. It is in this faith that I offer this humble work to all interested in the study of one of the world's great historic religions.

N.B.: *The name, India, wherever used in this book, refers to the country as a geographical whole and has no reference to its present political division into India and Pakistan.*

New Delhi.

July, 1955. S. DUTT

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Transliteration :

Well-known proper names (e.g., Pali, Ananda, etc.) and current geographical names (e.g., Banaras, Bihar, Gaya, etc.) are left without diacritical marks. Sanskrit passages given in the footnotes are in Roman script. The Romanization of the alphabet for both Sanskrit and Pali follows the scheme given below :

Vowels	अ (a)	आ (ā)	इ (i)	ई (ī)	उ (u)	ऊ (ū)
	ऋ (ṛ)	ऌ (ḷ)	ए (e)	ऐ (ai)	ओ (o)	
	औ (au)					

Consonants	क (k)	ख (kh)	ग (g)	घ (gh)	ङ (ṅ)
	च (c)	छ (ch)	ज (j)	झ (jh)	ञ (ñ)
	ट (ṭ)	ठ (ṭh)	ड (ḍ)	ढ (ḍh)	ण (ṇ)
	त (t)	थ (th)	द (d)	ध (dh)	न (n)
	प (p)	फ (ph)	ब (b)	भ (bh)	म (m)
	य (y)	र (r)	ल (l)	व (v)	ह (h)
	श (ś)	ष (ṣ)	स (s)		

Anusvāra ं (ṁ); *Anunāsika* ँ m̐; *Visarga* ः (*ḥ*)

SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY (showing abbreviations within brackets)

1. *Pali Literature*

The scripture of the Theravāda School in Pali, which is the completest Hīnayāna Buddhist scripture discovered till now, is arranged in three parts (Piṭakas, meaning ' baskets '), viz., Vinaya-piṭaka (VP), Sutta-piṭaka (SP) and Abhidhamma-piṭaka (AbhP). The first part contains the rules and regulations of the Sangha, the Buddhist Order of monks. It has two main divisions, viz., Mahāvagga (Maha) and Cullavagga (Culla). The second part contains the Lord's discourses on the faith and doctrines. It has five sections, called Nikāyas, viz., Dīgha-nikāya (DN), Majjhima-nikāya (MN), Saṁyutta-nikāya (SN), Aṅguttara-nikāya (AN) and Khuddaka-nikāya (KN). The last section, KN, is a collection of fifteen books, viz., Dhammapada (Dp), Udāna, Suttanipāta, Theragāthā and Therīgāthā, Jātakatthavannana, Vimānavatthu, Petavatthu, Apadāna, Buddhavaṁsa, and a few other minor works.

Where page-references to the texts of the scripture are given, they should be understood as being to the following published works :—

(i) Vinayapiṭakam by Oldenberg, Vols. I–V.
(ii) Dīgha Nikāya by Rhys Davids and Carpenter, Vols. I–II.
(iii) Majjhima Nikāya by Trenckner and Chalmers, Vols. I–III.
(iv) Aṅguttara Nikāya by Morris and Hardy, Pts. i–v.
(v) The Jātaka by Fausböll, Vols. I–VII (Fausböll).
(vi) Culla-Niddesa by Stede (Pali Text Society).

The Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta, DN, and the Mahāpadāna Suttanta, DN, are referred to as (MahaP) and (Mahapad) respectively.

The Abhidhamma-piṭaka, a later addition to the other two piṭakas of the canon, contains seven books of exegesis and explication of doctrines. For information on ' heretical ' doctrines, the Kathāvatthu, AbhP, with its ancient commentary, is a most important source. The edition used is by Taylor, Vols. I–II (Kv).

For fuller information on the Pali canon, see Appendix I in Thomas's *History of Buddhist Thought* (1933).

Among non-canonical works are :

(i) Milindapañho by Trenckner (Milinda).
(ii) Dīpavaṁsa by Oldenberg (Dpv.).

(iii) Mahāvaṁsa by Turnour (1889) (Tur).
(iv) Visuddhimagga by Maung Tin (Vm).
(v) Buddhagosuppatti (Text and Translation by James Gray, 1892) (Bud).

Nearly the whole of the Pali canon has now been published and also translated for the most part into English. In referring to the translations, different abbreviations, as shown below, have been used :

(i) Vinaya Texts (Sacred Books of the East, Vols. 13, 17, 20)—(VT).
(ii) Dialogues of the Buddha (Sacred Books of the Buddhists, in three parts contained in Vols. II–IV of the series)—(Dial).
(iii) Further Dialogues of the Buddha, Vols. I–II—(F. Dial).
(iv) Dhammapada (Sacred Books of the East, Vol. 10)—(Dp. tr.).
(v) Psalms of the Sisters (Pali Text Society)—(PS).
(vi) Points of Controversy by Mrs. Rhys Davids and Aung (P. of C.).
(vii) The Debates Commentary by B. C. Law—(DC.).
(viii) The Questions of Milinda (Sacred Books of the East, Vol. 35–36)—(QM.).
(ix) Human Types by B. C. Law—(HT.).
(x) Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics (Dhammasaṅgaṇi) by Mrs. Rhys Davids—(DS.).

2. *Sanskrit Literature*

A. The Upaniṣads

They represent post-Vedic development of Indian philosophical thought and the earliest of them are certainly pre-Buddhistic, e.g., Chāndogya (ChU) and Śvetāśvatara (SvU).

B. Grammatical Works

(i) Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī (Pan).
(ii) Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya, commentary on Pāṇini, of 2nd century, B.C. (Pat).

C. Epic, Drama and Law-books

(i) The Mahābhārata (including the Bhagavad-Gītā). The edition made by the Asiatic Society of Bengal has been used.
(ii) Viśākhadatta's Mudrārākṣasam (6th century, A.D.).
(iii) The Codes of Manu, Yājñavalkya and Nārada.

(iv) Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra (Revised and edited by Shama Sastry, 1924) (Arthasastra).

D. Buddhist Works in Sanskrit and mixed Sanskrit

(i) Lalitavistara by Lefmann, 3 tomes (Lal.).
(i) Mahāvastu by Senart (Mhu.).
(iii) Divyāvadāna by Cowell and Neil (Div.).
(iv) Saddharma-puṇḍarīka by Kern and Nanjio (Sad.) and its translation by Kern in Sacred Books of the East, Vol. 21 (Lotus).
(v) Suvarṇa-prabhāsa Sūtra by Nanjio and Idzumi (published from Kyoto by the Eastern Buddhist Society, 1931) (Suv.).
(vi) Vajra-cchedikā in Anecdota Oxiensia, Aryan Series, Vol. I, Pt. I and its translation in the Sacred Books of the East, Buddhist Mahāyāna Texts, Vol. 49.
(vii) Aśvaghoṣa's Mahāyāna-śraddhotpatti, extant in an ancient Chinese translation which is done into English by Suzuki under the title, 'Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna' (Awakening).
(viii) Mañjuśrī-Mūlakalpa, a Sanskrit Buddhist work, *circa* A.D. 800, containing a long section on the imperial dynasties of India down to the beginning of the Pāla dynasty of Bengal, edited by K. P. Jayaswal under the title, 'An Imperial History of India', 1934 (Imp. Hist.)
(ix) Viṣṇudharmottara, published by Venkatesvara, Bombay (Chapter 88 in pt. iii on *Eḍuka* construction).

3. *Art and Archæology*

(i) Reports of the Archæological Survey of India (ASR).
(ii) Mukerji's Report on a Tour of Exploration (RTE).
(iii) Epigraphica Indica (Ep. Ind.).
(iv) Inscriptions of Asoka (Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. I) by Hultzsch (Hultzsch).
(v) Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions (Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. II, pt. i) by Konow (Konow).
(vi) Cunningham's Ancient Geography of India, revised and edited by Mazumdar (AGI).
(vii) Marshall's Guide to Sānchi.
(viii) Maisey's Sānchi and its Remains.
(ix) Barua's Bārhut (Bar).
(x) Barua's Bārhut Inscriptions (Bar-I).
(xi) Hargreaves's The Buddha Story in Stone (Buddha Story).
(xii) Coomarswamy's Origin of the Buddha Image.

(xiii) Foucher's Beginnings of Buddhist Art (BBA).
(xiv) Krom's The Life of Buddha on the Stūpa of Barabudur (Krom).
(xv) Coomarswamy's History of Indian and Indonesian Art (HIIA).
(xvi) Fergusson's History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon.
(xvii) Kramrisch's Indian Sculpture (in the Heritage of India Series).
(xviii) J. E. Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw's The Scythian Period (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1949).

4. *Records by Chinese Pilgrims*

(i) Beal's Buddhist Records of the Western World, Vols. I–II (Beal).
(ii) Watters's On Yuan Chwang, Vols. I–II (Watters).
(iii) Grousset's In the Footsteps of the Buddha (Grousset).
(iv) I-Tsing's A Record of the Buddhist Religion, edited and translated by Takakasu (Takakasu).

5. *Tibetan Histories*

(i) 'History of Buddhism' by Bu-ston (Part II), translated by Dr. E. Obermiller (Heidelberg, 1932) (Buston).
(ii) Tārānātha's 'History of Buddhism', translated into German by Schiefner.
(iii) Tibetan Tales by Schiefner and Ralston (Broadway Tranlsations).

6. *Journals, Encyclopædias and Books of Reference*

(i) Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland (JRAS).
(ii) Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal (JBAS).
(iii) Indian Antiquary. (Ind. Ant.)
(iv) Indian Historical Quarterly (IHQ).
(v) Journal of the Department of Letters of the University of Calcutta (Journal, C.U.).
(vi) Sir Ashutosh Mookerji Silver Jubilee Volumes, published by the University of Calcutta.
(vii) Hastings's Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (ERE).
(viii) Seligman's Encyclopædia of the Social Sciences (ESS).
(ix) Childers's Dictionary of the Pali Language (Childers).

(x) Rhys Davids and Stede's Pali-English Dictionary (Pali Text Society) (D–PTS).
(xi) Malalasekera's Dictionary of Pali Proper Names, Vols. I–II (DPP).
(xii) Monier-Williams's Sanskrit-English Dictionary (New Edition, 1899) (S.E.Dict.).
(xiii) Sacred Books of the East Series (SBE).
(xiv) Publications of the Pali Text Society (PTS).

7. *Modern Works and Monographs*

(i) Brewster's Life of Gotama the Buddha (in Trübner's Oriental Series) (Brewster).
(ii) B. C. Law's Some Kṣatriya Tribes of Ancient India, Calcutta University, 1924 (Ksatriya Tribes).
(iii) B. C. Law's History of Pali Literature, Vols. I–II (HPL).
(iv) Dutt's Early Buddhist Monachism (Trübner's Oriental Series, 1924) (EBM); Problem of Indian Nationality (Calcutta University, 1926).
(v) Eliot's Hinduism and Buddhism, Vols. I–III (Eliot).
(vi) N. Dutt's Aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism (AMB); Early History of the Spread of Buddhism and the Buddhist Schools (EHS); Gilgit Manuscripts, Vol. 3.
(vii) E. J. Thomas's Life of the Buddha (Life); History of Buddhist Thought (HBT).
(viii) Jayaswal's Hindu Polity, 2nd Ed., 1943; Manu and Yājñavalkya, Tagore Lectures, Calcutta University, 1930.
(ix) Kern's Manual of Indian Buddhism.
(x) Keith's Buddhist Philosophy.
(xi) MacGovern's Introduction to Mahāyāna Buddhism (Mahayana).
(xii) Nanjio's Catalogue of the Buddhist Tripiṭaka (Nanjio).
(xiii) Nariman's Literary History of Sanskrit Buddhism (Sanskrit Buddhism).
(xiv) Oldenberg's The Buddha, translated from German into English by Hoey (Buddha).
(xv) Pratt's The Pilgrimage of Buddhism.
(xvi) Rai-Chaudhury's Early History of the Vaishnava Sect (HVS); Political History of Ancient India, 4th Ed. (PHI).
(xvii) Rhys Davids's Buddhist India.
(xviii) Mrs. Rhys Davids's Manual of Buddhism (Manual); Outlines of Buddhism (Outlines); Gotama the Man.

(xiv) Rockhill's Life of the Buddha (Rockhill).

(xx) Smith's Early History of India, 4th Ed. (Smith).

(xxi) Suzuki's The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra (Suzuki).

(xxii) Winternitz's History of Indian Literature in authorised English translation by the University of Calcutta, Vol. II (Winternitz).

(xxiii) Monographs on Asoka by Smith, Bhandarkar and Mookerji.

(xxiv) J. C. Jain's Life in Ancient India as depicted in the Jain Canons (New Book Company, Bombay, 1947) (Jain).

(xxv) Franklin Edgerton's Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit (Yale University Press, 1953) (BHS).

(xxvi) Waldschmidt's Das Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra (German —in "Essays of the German Academy of Sciences of Berlin: Class for Language, Literature and Art", No. 2–3 parts, 1950–'51).

(xxvii) P. Démiéville's "The Origin of Buddhist Sects according to Paramārtha" (French—in "Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques", published by the Belgian Institute of Chinese Higher Studies, 1932).

AUTHOR'S NOTE

" To this one thing we must bring our vision at the outset. The original movement in a little corner of India which, long after, came to be called Buddhism was one thing; the system of doctrine sanctioned and taught as *Sāsana* (orthodox teaching) by a *Sangha* (clergy) was another,—two things not different in kind, but different in emphasis and method. Both things started growing from the first.

The former remained fairly consistent while its initiator and his chief helpers lived on earth. The latter grew into a relative rigidity by a body of doctrine orally fixed and orally taught and, in time, taught in unchanging forms of wording. It also took on a dominant feature, as the memory of its founder grew from a remembered experience to an imagined idea of a glorified Superman, a worshipped abstract ideal, replacing the once seen, once known brother-man.

But there were other developments as the movement grew to be paramount over India, annexing both the culture and the folk-lore of the country, and spreading to other lands, mingling with other traditions.

There is nothing unique in this history of Buddhism. It is a world-way."

(*Per* Mrs. Rhys Davids: *An Historical Note on Buddhism*. Vide *Religions of the Empire*, ed. by W. L. Hare, pub. by Duckworth, London, 1925, p. 151.)

PART I

THE FOUNDER

From the legends themselves it is evident that they represent a cult, and that the making of the Buddha-legends started when a Buddha-cult had arisen. In them the Teacher's life and personality are viewed and set forth from the standpoint of the cult, and such of his sayings and doings, as tradition supplied, edited, remoulded also to a large extent, to conform to it. The Buddha who speaks in these legends is a conceptual Buddha, one reproduced by the makers of the legends, not from historical imagination, but out of their own cult-ideas.

In the most ancient stratum of legends, he is set up as the Teacher (*Satthā*), in accordance with the dogma of the cult that the Lord, having received 'enlightenment' himself, decided, after a spell of doubt and hesitation, to share it, out of pure compassion (*karuṇā*), with mankind. This compassionate Teacher of mankind, expounding his cult and its practice (*Dhamma-vinaya*), is the central figure of the earliest legends: he is a Concept, not a figure historically conceived.

The status and personality of this 'enlightened', 'compassionate' Teacher are defined by doctrine. Translated by virtue of his 'enlightenment' to a superior plane of being, he is a Superman (*Mahāpurisa*), distinguished by a superman's physiognomical marks (*lakkhaṇa*), but he was born on earth and he dwells among men, bound up in human relations. His basic humanity is never denied.

Take a typical legend from the canon: "*So have I heard.* The Lord was once staying at Nālandā in Pavārika's mango-grove. There came to him Kevaddha, a young householder, who bowed to him and took a seat on one side. So seated, Kevaddha said to the Lord: 'This Nālandā of ours, sir, is influential and prosperous, full of folk, crowded with people who are devoted to the Lord. If the Lord were to give a command to some brother to perform a miracle here, it would increase the faith of the people".[4] The practice of miracles is condemned by the Lord in a discourse which the legend purports to report.

The inset picture is that of a Teacher who can be 'seen' and who can be 'heard'.

But this primitive conception of a human teacher yielded

[4] Kevaddha Sūtta, DN, Dial, pt. i, p. 276.

by slow degrees to a growing spirit of docetism which appeared at a somewhat early stage in the Buddhist faith. It issued finally in the contrary concept, held by the Mahāyāna Buddhists, that the Lord had never a corporeal frame at all.[5] The idea of 'seeing' and 'hearing' the Lord appeared to them fantastic and false and in the nature of blasphemy. The Religion itself was supposed to be his body. The Buddha of the Mahāyānist conception declares: "They who saw me by form and they who heard me by sound, they, engaged in false endeavours, will not see me".[6] The custom of relic-worship is, therefore, scouted and scoffed at. Seek for a relic of the Lord's body?—says the Mahāyānist to the silly relic-hunter: "Expect rather a palm-fruit from a rose-apple tree, mango-blossoms from a date-palm and so forth, for how could a body yield a relic (*dhātu*) having neither blood nor bone?"[7]

While docetism was growing in the religion, one leading conservative school of Buddhism,—the ancient Theravāda,—set its face firmly against the new-fangled doctrine. Its canon, which exists completely in its Pali version, incorporates those legends in which the Lord figures only as a Superman, with one solitary, but important exception, viz., the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta*, in which he is sublimated to a supramundane status. The School admits a Teacher who, born on earth and living on earth, founded the religion, and by his own peripatetic teachings propagated it among common people for a little over half a century. But the legends of the canon do not carry us farther than this in the way of the Teacher's personal history.

To extract this personal history out of the legends calls decidedly for a technique.

In 1875, the French *savant*, Senart, interpreted the Buddha-legends, with which he was mostly conversant in Mahāyānist versions, as a Sun-myth, in the trend of the comparative

[5] The Vajracchedikā Sūtra in *Anecdota Oxoniensia*, Aryan Series, pt. 1, Buddhist Texts from Japan, ed. by Max Müller, p. 43: 'Dharmato Buddho draṣṭavyo dharmakāyā hi nāyakāḥ'.

[6] *Ibid.*—'Ye māṃ rūpeṇa cādrikṣur' ye māṃ ghoṣeṇa cānvaguḥ; Mithyā pahāṇaprasritā na māṃ drakṣanti te janāḥ'. (See translation in SBE, Vol. XIX, Mahāyāna Texts, pt. ii., pp. 140–141).

[7] Suv., p. 13: 'Jambu'stālaphalam dadyāt kharjuramāmramañjarīm.' Also *Ibid.*, p. 15: 'Anasthirudhire kāye kuto dhātur'bhaviṣyati'.

mythology popular in his day.[8] The theory was promptly assailed by Oldenberg in 1882 by a reconstruction of the 'Life of the Buddha' from Pali sources.[9] Oldenberg's venture in speculative biography was perhaps too hasty, but the progress of research in the Pali canon that has gone on since has brought into relief the fact that the legends point not to solar phenomena at all, but to the earthly career of a man. From the peculiar angle, however, from which that career is viewed in the legends, the theoretic Sun-myth is only replaced by an elaborate Man-myth, almost as elusive and teasing.

The question whether the disentanglement of the myth from the man is possible was taken up by Mrs. Rhys Davids, then the doyenne of Pali Buddhistic scholarship, and she stressed the possibility of it with a passionate conviction in her last writings. The 'chaff of myth', in her opinion, could be winnowed off the wheat, and out of the residue, a 'real human Buddha story' constructed.[10] She had envisaged a sort of 'Higher Criticism' of the Pali canon. But this 'higher criticism' was not followed up after her death in 1942 and its possibilities towards the reconstruction of a Buddha-life remain unascertained yet.

* * * * *

Positing the Buddha of the cult, the legends insist that thuswise must he be known and contemplated by all his followers. Yet, implicit in them, there is a vague, nebulous sort of awareness of a Buddha 'out of the cult'. It appears at least in one legend in which the author passes from the subjective attitude towards the Lord to an objective presentation of him, showing how the Lord appeared to people outside the circle of his followers and devotees. The conceptual Buddha of the cult becomes a real man in the presentation.

This legend narrates what happened on the occasion of a

[8] In his famous work, *Essai sur La Légende du Buddha*, published in Paris in 1875.

[9] *Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine and His Order* (translated from German into English by Hoey).

[10] "Here it is (in the Pali Buddha-legends) that we must try to winnow wheat from chaff. It is a difficult task, but we must do it; else we come to wrong conclusion"—Introductory Note in Brewster's *Life of Gotama the Buddha* (Trübner's Oriental Series, 1926), p. XXI. The attempt is made by herself in *Gotama the Man* (1928), *Manual of Buddhism* (1932), *Outlines of Buddhism* (1934) and several essays and articles.

visit paid by the Lord to the city of Campā.[11] A Brāhmaṇa admirer wished to take the opportunity for a personal contact with him, but was being dissuaded by his caste-people. The Brāhmaṇa, Soṇadaṇḍa by name, admonished them in a long exhortation,—for was nct Gotama, after all, a very worthy person and what could be the harm or loss of dignity in calling upon a man of Gotama's standing? "Truly, sirs, the Venerable Gotama," says Soṇadaṇḍa to this castemen, "is well-born on both sides, of pure descent through the father and the mother . . . with no reproach in respect of birth (——*important consideration from the Brāhmaṇical point of view*). Truly, sirs, Samaṇa Gotama has gone forth into religious life giving up his great clan, much money and gold and treasure. He is handsome, pleasant to look upon, inspiring trust, fair in colour, fine in presence and stately to behold". But this plain unsophisticated picture of a very striking and noble personality, the legend-maker had been conceiving objectively so far, seemed too bare, too unlike the cult-Buddha. So he touched it up a little with the colour of his own cult-idea of a Buddha's attributes: "Truly, sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama has all the thirty-two bodily marks of a Superman; many gods and men believe in him, and in whatever village or town he dwells, there the non-humans do the humans no harm". After interpolation of these attributes to Gotama, Soṇadaṇḍa passes on to describe his status and vocation: he is the head of an Order, of a School, and as teacher of a school, he is acknowledged to be the chief among all founders of sects; his reputation is derived from perfection of conduct and righteousness; kings and great men are his followers, and their names are set down as they occur in other legends of the canon.[12]

This conception of a purely human Buddha is not exactly a matter of 'dramatic necessity' in the legend. It amounts to a tacit recognition on the part of the legend-maker that he who was the Buddha or Bhagavā to the Buddhist and Superman in his eyes was at the same time a man renowned for his holiness among men, founder of a religious Order, whom lay people called by the name of Gotama.

[11] Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta, DN.
[12] See Dial., pt. i, pp. 149–150.

We have thus a harking back in the legend to a 'Gotama-Buddha' tradition, current among people outside the Buddhist circle. It is ultimately this tradition that is invoked in the reminiscence of the formula: 'So have I heard.' The tradition may be roughly delimited between the Lord's decease and the commencement of monkish legend-making about him which served effectively to efface it. We may guess that during this half-century folk ballads and traditional tales existed in the mouths of men, scraps of remembered teachings, personal reminiscences transmitted by direct disciples, even perhaps the general outline of a personality and career. The ruin of this pre-legendary tradition was complete,—in language, form, substance and spirit.—Are survivals of it discoverable in the canon? Undoubtedly suggestive are a few verses (*gāthās*) quoted in the *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta* in which the Lord's last missionary tour is described. The *gāthās* turn upon his last illness and the incidents of his painful trudge in the throes of illness to Kusinārā which he reached only to die. The memory of them would not be easily effaced: for folk poetry they would be an apt theme. The *gāthās*, sharply contrasting with the exalted style of their context, are curiously reminiscent in their *naïvete* of popular balladry.

* * * * *

The headquarters of Buddhism after the Lord's death and at least for three after-centuries were the 'Eastern Region' (*Puratthima*), Magadha and the contiguous provinces. It was in this 'eastern region' that the personal 'Gotama-Buddha' tradition had existed before it was entirely displaced by the monk-made Buddha-legends in which Gotama the man stands transfigured to the Superman, the *Mahāpurisa*, the object of a cult. Tradition points to the existence of a language or speech-form called 'Māgadhī', and the Lord, it is believed, delivered his sayings and sermons in a variety of this speech, named 'Ardha-Māgādhī'.

The Theravāda is wedded to this tradition.

The difficulty, however, is to identify this language.

If Māgadhī had been a living language spoken by the Lord, it must have been already dead when Asoka came to the Magadhan throne two centuries later. In the opinion of

Text page 4



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

THE MAHĀPURISA WITH THE PHYSIOGNOMIC MARKS
(From Mathura sculpture)



THE EASTERN HIMALAYAN RANGE



Courtesy : Rev. Riri Nakayama of Tokyo

LUMBINĪ NOW :

(A Japanese Buddhist alighting from an elephant at the Rest House)

some philologists, the so-called 'Eastern Dialect of the Edicts', of which the Lumbinī inscription gives a specimen, was a descendant of original Māgadhī.

Curiously enough, the dialect-name, 'Māgadhī', is traditionally preserved in an unexpected quarter,—in a convention of Sanskrit drama. It was the practice of Sanskrit dramatists to put the speeches of characters of different social ranks in different dialects and 'Māgadhī' is one of them, spoken by low-class people, boys and monks among the *dramatis personæ*.[13] It is a *psuedo*-Māgadhī, made up long centuries after actual Māgadhī had been dead and its speech-forms and idioms forgotten.

Whatever the Lord's own speech, it is evident that his preachings and sayings had come down by tradition to the first makers of legends in the various dialects of the area that first came under the influence of Buddhism.[14] It was debated at an early stage of legend-making whether the legends should be cast in a standard form, but standardisation was evidently not agreed upon: it is attested by all the versions, early and late, of an ancient canonical legend.[15]

Of all canons in different languages which Buddhists of different schools and of different eras made out of the legends, only one—the Theravāda canon,—has come down to us in a complete collection.

It was recovered from Ceylon, but its language is an Indian language called Pali of which the origin is obscure. The

[13] Woolner's *Introduction to Prākrit* (1928), p. 87.

[14] Prof. Edgerton's conclusion is as follows: "To me, the opinion of Lin Li-kokang (*Aide-memoire* 227–8) seems much sounder. He asks: 'Is it probable, however, that the Buddhists ever used one sole language, even in the oldest times? Considering the pliant and liberal spirit which they always showed in regard to use of languages, we may well ask whether there did not exist, from very early times (I would say, 'from the lifetime of the Buddha') a multiplicity of Buddhist languages, Māgādhī being only one of them . . . Why not assume that other centres of ancient Buddhism, Vaiśālī, Kauśāmbī, Mathurā, Ujjainī, and others, also had their own special dialects, which served as sacred languages for the communities established in these centres, according to the principle which the canonical texts expressly set down that Buddhist communities should adopt the local dialects?" (BHS., p. 4).

[15] Culla, 33.1 (VT, iii, p. 150)—"At the present time, Lord, Bhikkhus differing in name, differing in lineage, differing in birth, differing in family, have gone forth. These corrupt the word of the Buddha (*Buddha-vacana*) by repeating it in their own dialects. Let us, Lord, put the word of the Buddha in verse (*Chandaso*)". The suggestion was disapproved by the Lord, who said: "I allow you, Bhikkhus, to learn the word of the Buddha (*Buddha-vacana*) each in his own dialect" (p. 151).

Ceylonese tradition is that it was the work of Mahinda who went to Ceylon and introduced Buddhism there during the reign of Emperor Asoka; that the canon had originally been in the language of Ceylon, *Sinhālese*; that nearly seven centuries afterwards it was rendered into Māgadhī (identified with Pali) by Buddhaghosa (*circa*—A.D. 400); and that, thereafter, "Buddhaghosa had the works written by Thera Mahinda put into a heap in a sacred place near the Great Pagoda and set on fire"[16]: Since then the Theravāda canon is supposed to have remained in 'Māgadhī' (Pali).

It is a hardly credible legend. Over against it, we have a different tradition, of obviously north Indian origin, recorded by Vinītadeva, that the original language of the Theravāda (*Sthavira-vāda*) canon was *Paiśācī*. A few specimens of this ancient language survive.[17]

In the transference of materials from popular tradition to monkish legends, there was a transmutation as thorough and complete as could be. The legends broke with the tradition, not only in linguistic medium, but also in form and spirit. The substance itself suffered what was like a 'sea-change into something rich and strange'.

For the casting of a Buddha-legend, a recognised conventional form seems to have been early invented by monks. It is inherited by all sects and schools of Buddhism and probably dates back within half a century of the Lord's decease when his followers formed a single undivided body. It got stereotyped and, except where a number of legends is consolidated into some sort of continuous narrative, it characterises each particular legend, composed half a century or five centuries after the Lord.

There are three components in the form,—(i) the introductory Formula, 'So have I heard', (ii) a Statement of the Time and Occasion (*Nidāna*), and (iii) the Discourse or Dialogue (*Buddha-vacana*). The formula is a link with the supposed origin of

[16] Bud., p. 29.

[17] The tradition recorded by Vinītadeva (whose date is "about A.D. 700", according to Dr. S. C. Vidyabhushan, *Indian Logic : Mediaeval School*, p. 119), in his work on the doctrinal differences of Buddhist schools, which survives in a Tibetan translation, is to the effect that the Sthaviravādins (Theras) used *Paiśācī* in their scripture, while the Sarvāstivādins used *Sanskrit*, the Mahāsanghikas *Prākrit* and the Sammitīyas *Apabhraṁśa*. The relationship between Paiśācī, of which some literary samples survive, and Pali is still a moot-point of Indian philology.

the legend in tradition; the *nidāna* supplies verisimilitude, and the discourse is the discharge of the Buddha's function, according to canonical doctrine, of 'enlightening' mankind.

It is evident that the pre-legendary tradition, where it was actually drawn upon in the legends, was treated rather as raw material. It celebrated and transmitted the memory of a man now transfigured in the legend-maker's faith. Hence his selective use of the materials to indicate, illustrate and emphasise the Lord's Buddhahood or his Superman character. Doubtlessly there was much infiltration of the traditional memory of the Lord from tradition into legend,—even the manner of discourse in the earlier legends has some individuality and the cultish Buddha-concept individual traits. On the legend-maker's ideation of the Lord, that traditional memory must have exerted a light, perhaps unconscious moulding pressure.

It is only in this superseded pre-legendary 'Gotama-Buddha' tradition of Magadha (*circa* 483–433 B.C.) that the foundation for a 'real life of the Buddha', could have existed.

* * * * *

For the reality of that life, however, for which no historical foundation now exists, and also in some measure of its social and cultural environments, the religion itself holds implicit evidence,—in its original character as well as in some of its basic doctrines and institutions.

Primitive Buddhism, as presented in the Pali canon, is decidedly a religion of escapism, which regards household life as a bar to the highest spiritual attainment. It adopts a system of practice and culture from which all 'motives of action' are deliberately excluded. It is decidedly unworldly in its highest ethic. Typical of its attitude is the ancient legend which embodies the Lord's discourse on the advantages of a wanderer's life. To one who have developed faith in the Lord and his teachings, the thought must occur, it is said: "Full of hindrances is household life: it is a dusty path. Free as the air is the life of religious wandering. It is not easy for one living in household life to practise the higher life (*brahmacariya*) in all its fulness, in all its purity,

in all its bright perfection".[18] The legend is that the founder of Buddhism himself renounced the world, and it finds corroboration straighway in the stress, variously reiterated, which primitive Buddhism lays on renunciation of the world as means to the highest spiritual self-fulfilment.

The four Noble Truths (*Ariyasaccāni*) concerning Sorrow, viz., that it exists, that it has its causes, that it may be brought to cessation, and that there is a path which leads to the cessation of Sorrow, have been fixed and fundamental tenets of Buddhism through all its many-sided historical developments. A learned Indian Buddhist monk, perhaps of the third century, A.D., when Buddhism was split up into many sects and schools, says thus in the introductory part of his treatise on sectarian differences in Buddhism: "When I look at the world all around (I find that people) are drifted about by diverse views, distorting the words of Sākyamuni. I would (therefore) explain all their doctrines. When I examine Buddhism (I perceive that), the Four Noble (Aryan) Truths are to be relied upon (as constituting the fundamental doctrine of Buddhism). All Buddhists should accept these truths first as one gathers gold out of sands".[19]

This basic category of Truths about Sorrow, common to both the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna, shows a certain integral unity: it seems to bear the stamp, as it were, of an individual mind that has realised finally that suffering is inherent in life-process and is convinced also that there is a way out. All the ancient legends assert that this realisation was a *personal* one,—not a mere dogma of the religion,—and that it came to the founder himself through a series of concrete individual experiences. These experiences, though in doctrine mere signs (*nimitte*) of the Lord's future Buddhahood, suggest irresistibly a factual foundation.

The institutions of the Buddhist Order of monks also show clearly the marks of their origin in the wandering community of religious men into which the Lord is said to have passed after his Great Renunciation. It was in this community that

[18] Sāmañña-phala Sutta (DN. Vol. I, p. 63)—'*Saṁbādho gharāvāso rajopatho ablhokāsa-pabbajjā. Na idaṁ sukaram agāramajjhāvasatā ekantaparipuṇṇam ekanta-parisuddhaṁ saṁkha-likhitaṁ brahmacariyaṁ caritum.*'

[19] See Masuda's translation from Chinese into English of Vasumitra's work in Vol. I of *Journal, C.U.*, pp. 4–5.

he found his first disciples and adherents, and, when, after the Lord's decease, the Order came into existence, its institutions were derived from the parent community. The *Uposatha* —a fundamental institution of Buddhism,—points back, as we shall see, to an established custom among the religious wanderers. The Buddhists only transformed the custom, making it centre in the recital of a codified body of rules and regulations for monks called the *Pātimokkha*, held to be so sacred that even in the canon it is kept somewhat apart.[20] It is believed to contain the Lord's 'Thou shalt nots'.

But most strikingly suggestive of the influence and guidance of a personal founder is the nature of the constitution which the Buddhist Order came to adopt for itself after the Lord's decease. The natural and normal course for the Order would have been to elect a direct disciple of the Lord or a monk of pre-eminent position to headship in accordance with the custom that prevailed among the sects of the wanderers' community. But, instead, the Buddhist Order adopted what was unknown in Magadha where the Order had originated, viz., a purely republican form of constitution, resembling the polity that prevailed among outer tribes living to the north and west of Magadha. The fact points unmistakably to some sort of direction by a founder who hailed from one of these tribes, viz., the Sākya, and who was familiar with tribal forms of political self-government.[21]

The institution of pilgrimage in Buddhism also links on the religion to the human founder and his earthly life.

Unlike the metaphysical Mahāyāna Buddha-concept, the concept of primitive Buddhism was an essentially dynamic one. The Lord was a *Mahāpurisa*, placed beyond all categories of earthly and celestial existence,—sublime in his unique Buddhahood,—but he was consummated by a process of becoming. The process was conceived as having been accomplished on earth and in a human career. The truth

[20] I can assign no valid reason for the Pātimokkha not being made a part of the *Vinayapiṭaka*, though embedded in the ancient commentary on that work, except that it was regarded with special sanctity.

[21] K. P. Jayaswal advanced the theory that the Sangha was originally a political concept and it was adopted in the organisation of the Buddhist monastic order by the founder himself. According to Jayaswal, the constitution of the political Sangha among the tribal republics was the pattern of the Sangha of Buddhist monks. (*Hindu Polity*, p. 44.). See *infra*, pp. 63–64.

and actuality of the process had confirmation in the traditions of him that lay in the background of the legends and traces of the career were left in the very soil of the land. The docetists who held that the Lord never lived on earth are faced roundly by the protagonist of the Theravāda in the *Kathāvatthu* with these pointed leading questions: "Was he not born at Lumbinī? Did he not receive perfect enlightenment under the Bodhi tree? Was not the Wheel of *Dhamma* set rolling by him at Banaras? Did he not renounce the will to live at the Cāpāla Cetiya? Did he not complete existence at Kusinārā?"[22].

Pilgrims have followed the trail of this career for well over two thousand years. Pilgrimage is one of the oldest institutions of Buddhism. It is recommended in the canon,—in the *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta* ('Book of the Great Decease')—where it is extolled as act of signal spiritual merit, re-birth 'in the happy realms of heaven' being promised even to those who perchance may die on a pilgrimage. In the same canonical book, a 'pilgrim's chart' is found incorporated,—a specification of the four holiest places of Buddhism, viz., 'Where the Lord was born', 'Where he received enlightenment', 'Where he turned the Wheel of *Dhamma*' and 'Where he passed away'.[23] They are all identified and are now well-known localities that would not have been thus sought for and tracked in ancient times by pilgrims if the events believed to impart holiness to them had been produced out of the symbolism of a Sun-myth. The regional background of the Buddha-story of the legends has a solid and indubitable reality which archæology has confirmed. The place-names in them have nearly all been substantiated,—Lumbinī (Rummin), Uruvelā (Urel), Vesāli (Basarh), Kusinārā (Kasia), Pāṭaligāma (Patna), and those other places that still retain their ancient names and sites.

While the intimacy and interconnection of the legends with a lost but real tradition is undeniable, it must be obvious that no approach to historical truth is possible by taking the legends directly and at their face-value. Those who have not grasped the crucial facts,—the origin of the legends in a cult,

[22] Kv, xviii (P. of C., p. 323).
[23] Maha, V, 16-22.

the distinction between the Buddha the man and the Buddha the cult-concept, the curious non-historical attitude of the monk legend-makers, taking indifferently an incident from actual tradition or inventing one, only to set off the Buddhahood of the Lord,—will hug illusion in stead of reality. 'The Buddha did this' or 'The Buddha said that' in the legends yields no biographical value until each instance is sifted and evaluated in a free critical spirit.

But the figure of a real human Founder is there at the starting point of the story.

APPENDIX

Buddhaghosa on 'So-have-I-heard'

There can be little doubt that the phrase, 'So have I heard', occurring at the beginning of every Buddha-legend, is no part of the legend itself, but is the formal asseveration of the Reciter (*Bhāṇaka*).

Buddhagosa, the ancient (early 5th century A.D.—see *infra*, pp. 198–199) commentator on the Theravāda canon, however, makes the phrase part and parcel of the legend itself. In his comment on '*Evaṁ me sutam*' in the *Sumaṅgala-vilāsinī*, he puts the phrase into the mouth of Ananda, who is supposed to have conveyed the 'Buddha-vacana' to the First Council (see *infra*, pp. 102–104) convened by Mahā-Kassapa. Ananda, it is said by Buddhaghosa, was called upon by Mahā-Kassapa to state where and under what circumstances the *Brahmajāla*, the leading *sutta* of the Dīgha Nikāya, was propounded, and in answering the question, the first words that Ananda said were: 'So have I heard'.[24].

Buddhaghosa's exegesis of the phrase is strictly from the *abhidhamma* standpoint: he splits it and takes it up word by word and explicates each word by its 'special meaning' (*visesattha*). It is difficult to follow him through the technicalities of his explication, and he nowhere puts it directly that what Ananda meant by the phrase, 'So have I heard', was that the 'Buddha-vacana' contained in the *sutta* had been

[24] "Suttapiṭake ādi-nikāyassa ādi-suttaṁ Brahmajālam pucchantena āyasmatā Mahākassapena 'Brahmajālam āvuso Ānanda kattha bhāsitan ti' evamādi-vacana-pariyosāne yatha ca bhāsitaṁ yañ ca ārabbha bhāsitaṁ taṁ sabbaṁ pakāsento āyasmā Ānando '*evaṁ me sutam*' ti ādikam āha."—*Sumaṅgala-vilāsinī*, PTS. Part I, p. 26.

heard by Ananda from the Lord's own lips. The idea may be implicit, but it is not expressed in so many words.

After a lengthy comment on the word '*Sutam*',—so recondite that none but an expert on Buddhist *Abhidhamma* can pretend to grasp it fully,—Buddhaghosa states that "by saying that I have only 'heard' the saying of the Bhagavā, he (Ananda) absolves himself (i.e., does not take upon himself the responsibility for what has been said), points to the Satthā (Teacher) and quotes the words of the Jina (Buddha)".[25]

[25] 'Kevalaṁ sutam ev' etaṁ mayā tass' eva pana Bhagavato vacanan' ti dīpento attānaṁ parimoceti, Satthāram apadissati, Jina-vacanam appeti, dhamma-nettiṁ patiṭṭhāpati.—*Ibid*, p. 31.

II

LUMBINĪ, THE BIRTH-PLACE

LUMBINĪ, the name of the holy birth-place of the Lord, must have passed from tradition into legend, when, about half a century after his decease, the Buddha-legends commenced among his monk followers in the *Puratthima* (Magadha and its neighbourhood).

These legend-makers of the south seem to have had but a faint idea of its location. Its geographical bearing in the legends is slight and vague,—only that it was within the territory of the Sākyas which lay 'beside the Himalayas'.[1] Being far away north, across several intervening territories and forbidding physical barriers, a pilgrimage to Lumbinī from Magadha would be a rare undertaking in that age. Until two centuries later, when a Magadhan Emperor made the difficult pilgrimage and brought Lumbinī out of the mists of legend into the spotlight of topography, legends only nursed the name.

Since that imperial pilgrimage, the site of Lumbinī has suffered strange vicissitudes, appearing to and receding from human eyes through a vast stretch of time that left nothing in the world of men unchanged,—none of the ancient territorial divisions, ethnic distribution, incidence of population or the primitive clannish and tribal organisation of society. Secure against its eternal background of the Himalayas, Lumbinī seems to have played at hide-and-seek for more than two millennia with men.

The geographical bearing of Lumbinī has to be taken from the eastern Himalayan range. The soaring peaks of this range, with their crowns of eternal snow, stand back towards the plateau of Tibet. On the Indian side the mountains fall away to a long valley: the small independent kingdom of Nepal has grown up in this mountain-valley in comparatively

[1] 'Himavanta passato'—Pabbajjā Sutta in *Sutta-nipāta*, vv. 18–19 (SBE, Vol. X, pp. 68–69).

modern times. It is flanked on its south by a rugged range of foot-hills. On their sides hill-men since time out of mind have eked out a scanty cultivation in terraces. In the lap of these cultivated foot-hills of Nepal, nestled many long centuries ago the little village of Lumbinī.

Down below in the sweeping plains of India stretched the flat length of the Gangetic tract, the United Provinces (now renamed *Uttar Pradeśa*), the north-eastern section of which was known as Kośala in ancient times. Farther down, roughly covering the area of modern Bihar, was Magadha of ancient renown, standing out in her sovereign pride of place as the seat of two mighty imperialisms of ancient India, and in both width of territory and wealth of culture and art, unparalleled in ancient Indian history.[2]

The legends relate that the foot-hills (now in the forest-belt, called Terai, in eastern Nepal) were covered by a kingdom, so called, of the Sākya clan, perhaps an oligarchical state feudatory to the adjoining kingdom of Kośala, and that it was ruled, at the beginning of the 6th century, B.C., from its capital, Kapilāvastu, by an elected king or chief whose name first appears in the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta* as Suddhodana.[3] The name is accepted in all Buddha-legends as that of the father of the Buddha, as well as the name of his queen Māyā, the Buddha's mother.

Queen Māyā was with child,—so the legends tell,—and her time was near. Indian custom of immemorial antiquity requires that a woman's first child should be born under her father's roof, and Māyā with only two female attendants was on her way to her parents' house. Proceeding about a couple of miles eastwards, she reached Lumbinī. The pangs of labour were already upon her and she stood leaning to take rest against the trunk of a tree. In that position she was delivered of a male child. This is the barest outline of the holy nativity; hundreds of legends of after ages have filled

[2] *Re* ancient history of Magadha, see B. C. Law's *The Magadhas in Ancient India* (R.A.S. monograph, XXIV, 1946).

[3] In this *suttanta*, however, the names of the Buddha's mythical predecessors and of their parents, which must have been invented, also occur. The names of the Buddha's parents as in *Mahapad*, are accepted in all Pali legends, and at the same time we find them in the legends of other schools (e.g., in the *Mahāvastu* and the *Lalitavistara*). It is likely that the names of the Buddha's parents came into the legends from pre-legendary tradition.

it in with miraculous details and embroidered it with pious myths.

About three centuries after the event the legends celebrate,—centuries during which Buddhism had spread widely in India and a great Buddhist emperor, Asoka, was on the Magadhan throne,—the legendary fame of Lumbinī was renewed by an imperial visit.

Asoka, being a Buddhist, believed in the spiritual efficacy of pilgrimage and perhaps went on more than one tour of pilgrimage. Legend has it that he was accompanied by a religious preceptor named Upagupta. One of the emperor's tours is described in an ancient legend-collection, to which the title *Divyāvadāna* (Heavenly Tales) has been given,[4] and the description, made up long after the event, is in the customary legendary style,—brief and sketchy in outline and conventional in phraseology, the particulars having been largely wiped off by time's obliterating hand.

Said the emperor to his preceptor Upagupta: "It is my desire, sir, to worship those places where Lord Buddha lived and set up memorials there for after generations". "Gracious are thy intentions"; replied the preceptor, "I myself will be thy guide;" and so the emperor with a large retinue commenced the pilgrimage under Upagupta's guidance.

The very first place they visited was Lumbinī. Stretching out his right arm, "Lo and behold!" said Upagupta, "Here was the Lord born". The emperor fell prostrate in salutation, rose, folded his palms and worshippped the spot. We are told further that he gave away 'a hundred thousand' on the spot in charity to the kinspeople of the Buddha and erected a 'memorial mound' to mark the spot.[5]

The compiler of the legend was but transmitting the flotsam of distant historical reminiscences, at least a century back of his own time. What the memorial set up by the emperor actually was, a mound or a monolith or a shrine, and what the actual donation had been was far too vague in folk memory at the time.

[4] It is an undated collection of Buddhist legends in a somewhat corrupt form of Sanskrit, the manuscripts of which were discovered in Nepal. The title, *Divyāvadāna*, was given to the collection by Burnouf. It was edited by Cowell and Neil, Cambridge University Press, 1886.

[5] Div., pp. 389–390. The legend speaks vaguely of a 'caitya' and a donation of a 'hundred thousand' (*śata-sahasram*).

What happened to Lumbinī after this imperial visit described in the legend and corroborated now by archæology, is but matter for speculation. For several centuries following, it must have been a favourite place of pilgrimage, a centre of attraction to Indian Buddhists. Perhaps it continued for centuries to be a busy hamlet, prospering greatly from the open-handedness of Buddhist pilgrims from all parts of the country. But a green creeping menace hung constantly over it,—the forest of the Terai that advanced slowly upon it for a stranglehold plant by plant and thicket by thicket. A time came when Lumbinī passed out of sight, swallowed up by the immense spreading wilderness.

Again, centuries passed by, during which Buddhism overflowed from India into the countries of the Far East, and from China came a stream of pilgrims across the mid-Asian deserts and the uncharted eastern seas to visit the homeland of Buddhism.

Eager and intrepid, these Chinese pilgrims would leave no holy place, however difficult of access, out of their itinerary. Some of them have left records of their travels and experiences. The best known are *Fo-kwo-ki* by Fa-hsien and *Si-yu-ki* by Hsüan-tsang,[6] separated by about a couple of centuries in time. Both of them visited the Himalayan native land of the Buddha which they found deserted and choked with jungles. "The country of Kapilāvastu (the ancient Sākya territory)", writes Fa-hsien after his visit round A.D. 400, "is now a great desert. You seldom meet any people on the roads for fear of the white (?) elephants and the lions. It is impossible to travel negligently".[7] The ruins of the capital city of Kapilāvastu still showed; a small community of Buddhist monks still clung desperately to the ruins, while sacred mounds and monasteries were mouldering and crumbling into dust in the woods around. But Lumbinī, the holiest of holy places, marked for all time by Emperor Asoka's memorial, could not be located in that wilderness. Fa-hsien only mentions it vaguely and does not seem to have seen it at all.

Two centuries and three decades later came Hsüan-tsang

[6] The spelling adopted is that favoured by Grousset. See *In the Footsteps of the Buddha*, p. 25, footnote. '*Ki*' in Chinese means 'Record'.

[7] Beal, Vol. I, p. 2.

to Kapilāvastu, where among the ruins of the vanished city he found a company of thirty monks only from whom, evidently, he heard legends about Lumbinī, of the Holy Birth and of the memorial erected by Asoka. Some of these monks had perhaps ventured into the outlying forest: they might have seen the ancient Asokan memorial with their own eyes. They reported to the pilgrim that it had been a great 'stone pillar on the top of which was the figure of a horse', and that afterwards, as Hsüan-tsang adds with a quaint touch of native Chinese superstition, 'by the contrivance of a dragon', it was broken off in the middle and fell to the ground.[8] To the south-east of Lumbinī still flowed a hill-stream which local people called the 'river of oil'. Hsüan-tsang's visit to Kapilāvastu when he gathered all this interesting hearsay about Lumbinī was at the end of A.D. 636,[9] and for more than a millennium and a quarter thereafter Lumbinī remained buried in oblivion in the depths of the impenetrable Terai forest.

* * * * *

It was not till the nineties of the last century that Lumbinī came to light once again. In the forest the wood-cutters were plying their axes as usual, felling timber-trees. Through an opening in the trees, something strange and man-made showed itself,—a yellowish pillar of sandstone cleft down to the middle by a stroke of lightning and the top of it shattered and largely embedded in accumulated debris. Below the crack made by the lightning, the ruined pillar showed some strange unintelligible inscriptions.

The existence of the inscribed pillar had been known to foresters of the Terai for some years before it attracted in 1894 the attention of an official archæologist Dr. Führer,—just 2,175 years after Emperor Asoka had set it up. On 1st December, 1895, it was identified as Asoka's monolith, and the 'river of oil', Hsüan-tsang had heard of centuries before, trickled down still within sight. Hill-men still called it by the same ancient name, *Tilaur*, the 'river of *Til* (oilseed)'.

[8] Beal, Vol. II, p. 25.

[9] On 25th December 636, according to Cunningham's approximate chronology of Hsüan-tsang's travels. See AGI, Appendix A, p. 646.

Buried in a thicket and perched on a mound was also a small brick-built shrine to a goddess unknown to Hindu or Buddhist mythology. This shrine had been kept up by local hill-men since forgotten antiquity.

The inscription below the crack in the pillar was deciphered and edited by Dr. Bühler in 1898. It is in five lines containing three sentences only:

(*a*) When king Devānampiya Piyadasi had been anointed twenty years, he came himself and worshipped (this spot), because the Buddha Sākymuni was born here.
(*b*) (He) both caused to be made a stone bearing a horse (?) and caused a stone-pillar to be set up (in order to show) that the Blessed One (Bhagavaṁ) was born here.
(*c*) (He) made the village of Lumminī free of taxes, and paying (only) an eighth share (of the produce).[10]

The language of the inscription was an eastern dialect, possibly the court language of Pāṭaliputra in Asoka's time, of which the principal peculiarity was the tendency to convert 'r' into 'l'. Thus in the inscription the word '*Rājina*' (by the king) is modified as '*Lājina*', and this phonological peculiarity was particularly helpful in equiparating the name, Rummin, by which hill-men called the find-place of the pillar, with the Lumbinī of the legends.

The 'goddess of Rummin' also was identified through the discovery near the shrine of a much defaced relief in stone showing the Buddha's nativity as given in the legends,—Queen Māyā holding the branch of a tree and the divine child, just delivered, standing by her side.[11] The nativity panel also was of yellowish sandstone like the Asokan pillar, though its age and original emplacement are unknown, the likelihood being that it belonged to the original shrine.

The shrine itself had been built and rebuilt over the debris, heaped up to a pretty high mound by the accumulation of all the centuries, during which the original cult associated with it had passed into complete oblivion. The mother of

[10] Hultzsch, pp. 164–165. See also Percival's *Nepal*, pp. 268–269. The word *Aṭha-bhāgiye* has been differently interpreted as 'paying' or 'entitled to' an eighth share of the produce.

In (*b*), 'a stone bearing a horse' is Hultzsch's mistranslation for *Silā-vigaḍabhīcā* which means literally a 'great stone-wall', referring most probably to a stone-railing round the monolith which has disappeared. The 'horse' was suggested by Hsüan-tsang's description.

[11] See Plate, xiva (Fig. 2) in RTE.

the Buddha had become a local goddess to whom folk of the locality unknowingly kept up by tradition the ancient worship from generation to generation. "The hill-men", says Mukerji who explored the shrine in 1899, "call her Rūpā-dei. She is believed to grant the prayers of her devotees who bring her offerings of eatables, goats and fowls that are sacrificed and eaten here with great ceremony".[12] Strange that the tradition of holiness of the spot and memory of the travail of Queen Māyā, transformed now into a guardian deity, should be kept up in this crude fashion by hill-men from age to age when all else had been forgotten!

"The Buddha Sākyamuni was born here"—so Asoka's memorial factually declares. But behind the bare fact Buddhist faith through the ages has set up a mystic background.

Was it a deity of high heaven who incarnated himself? Could his conception be otherwise than immaculate and his delivery in the normal way of human maternity? Could it happen without miraculous accompaniments? And lastly, as the Mahāyānaists of a later age speculated, was the Birth a real event at all or an illusory act of Divinity?

When the *lipikāras* (inscription-writers) of Asoka put their chisels to the memorial stone, myths had already begun to spring from such wondering mystic speculations. They flourished later in hundreds of texts and stones, and they have curious parallels, as Buddhistic scholars of the West have pointed out, in the Gospel myths of the Christ's nativity.[13]

[12] RTE, p. 34.
[13] *Life*, pp. 35–36.

III

THE EARTHLY CAREER

THE CHILD, born at Lumbinī, had a long span of life.

The memory of that long life is preserved in a *gāthā* (verse) inset in the report of the Lord's discourse to Subhadda, the last disciple to be ordained by the Lord himself:

> " But twenty-nine was I when I renounced
> The world, Subhadda, seeking after good;
> For fifty years and one year more, Subhadda,
> Since I went out, a pilgrim have I been
> Through the wide realms of Virtue and Truth."[1]

Incidents of this half-century's mission are taken in the canonical legends to supply settings for his dialogues and discourses. There is no attempt, however, to put them together in biographical order or in narrative sequence. Some 'moments' in the Lord's career, however, are fixed, and the legends have some continuity when they lead up to one of these 'moments'.[2] But as a rule an incident is noted in the legend and set forth only when a discourse hangs upon it. 'Once on a time when the Lord was staying at such and such a place, some incident occurred, and it prompted this discourse,'—such in effect is the conventional opening of a legend, its *nidāna*, 'statement of occasion'.

To take them as anecdotes of a life is to miss their real point and purpose. The object of the makers of these legends was not 'to tell the Buddha story', but to define and expound the Buddha-cult,—the 'doctrine and practice' (*Dhamma-vinaya*), as they termed it,—and they would naturally have scant interest in preserving out of tradition

[1] MahaP, V, 62 (SBE, XI, p. 108).

[2] "There are three attempts in the canon at what appears to be consecutive biography or even autobiography of the Buddha: firstly, the two accounts in the *Majjhima Nikāya* (Nos. 26 and 36) giving his search for truth; secondly, the fragments in the first part of the *Mahāvagga* of the Vinaya which relate the commencement of his ministry, and, thirdly, the *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, dealing with the last weeks(?) of his life"—Brewster, p. xvii.

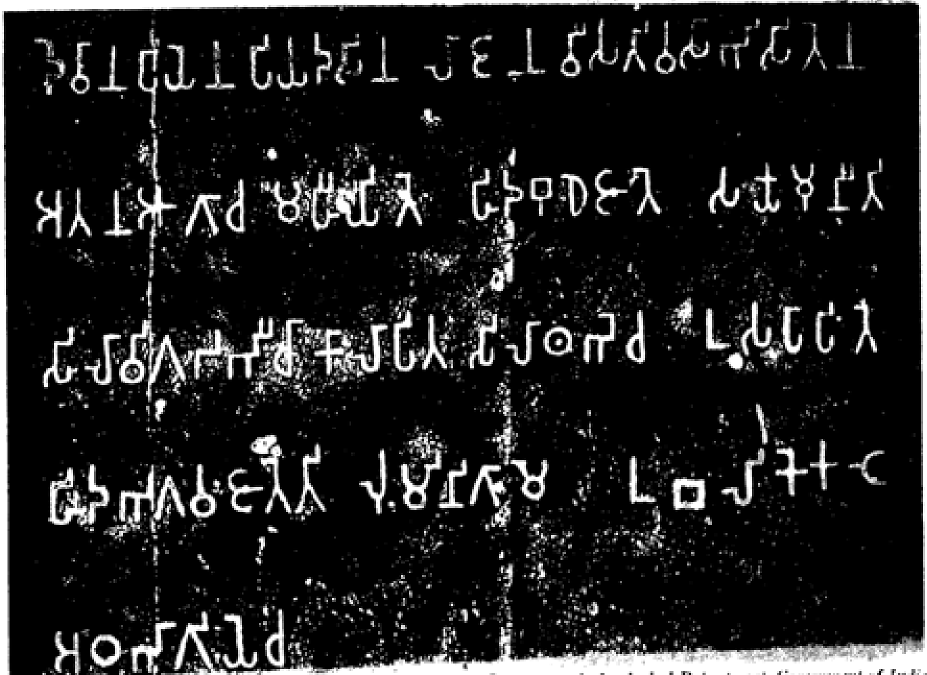


Courtesy: Dr. R. K. Mukherji

ASOKA'S COMMEMORATIVE PILLAR AT LUMBINĪ
(AFTER RESTORATION)

PLATE V

Text page 23



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

PLATE VI

Text page 23



V.
RECORD OF THE BUDDHA'S BIRTH ON THE LUMBINĪ PILLAR

VI.
THE DEFACED IMAGE OF MĀYĀ

Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

what did not seem to them to illustrate the Buddhahood of the Lord or to relate to his teachings. It was the Cult they were primarily concerned with and not the personal tradition.

The lack of biographical motive in the legends is all too evident. The whole career of the Lord is presented as the predestined mission of a Buddha: each of the 'moments' bears a cultish significance,—the birth and infancy a 'miracle'[3]; the renunciation, an event of central importance in universal history, anxiously watched by gods and men[4]; the 'noble search for truth' (*ariya-pariyesaṇa*) only 'wayfaring to Buddhahood'[5]; the 'enlightenment' the discovery of the 'Chain of Causation'[6]; and, lastly, the death 'the Great Extinction which leaves nothing behind'.[7] The personal history is sublimated in its cultish presentation out of normal humanity.

Yet there is something that holds it on to real life. It is the historical time-relation,—the consistent and uniform reference of the Buddha-story to a particular age and milieu, which are brought into relief by the legends themselves in their numerous references to localities, tribes and clans, customs and manners, social and cultural ideas, and, above all, the life of the teeming community of wandering religious men of that age, their habits, practices and doctrines. These scattered references, partly contemporaneous and partly traditional, have enabled scholars to reconstruct piecemeal the temporal and historical background of the legends.[8] By placing the legendary Buddha-story against this background, we can see elements of reality standing out from merely cultish accretions.

* * * * *

There is a prelude to the Buddha-story of the legends to which the name, 'Legend of the Four Signs', is given. The significance of this title will be explained later. It describes

[3] As it is regarded in Acchariya-abbhuta-dhamma Sutta, MN.

[4] As in Lal, p. 218, describing how the gods assembled to watch the 'going-out'.

[5] As it is regarded in Ariya-pariyesaṇa Sutta, MN.

[6] See *infra*, pp. 39–40.

[7] As it is described in MahaP, III, 20 (SBE, XI, p. 48).

[8] e.g., Rhys Davids' *Buddhist India* and Fick's '*Social Life in Northern India in the Buddha's Time*'.

a series of poignant personal experiences, four several incidents, which occurred to the Lord when he was Prince Gotama at Kapilāvastu. They are supposed to have been the urge and motive for his after-career.

It is a legend, with slightly variant versions, of which probably the oldest is as follows[9] :—

> The prince, driving out in a chariot, happened to see an aged man, 'as bent as roof-gable, leaning on a staff, tottering as he passed'. "That man, good charioteer, what has he done that his hair is not like that of other men, nor his body?"—asked the prince in innocent wonderment. "He is what is called an aged man, my lord",—replied the charioteer. "But why is he called 'aged'?" "He is called aged, my lord, because he has not much longer to live". "But then, good charioteer, am I too subject to old age?" "You, my lord, and we too, we all are of a kind to grow old, though we have not got past old age". "Why then, good driver, enough of the park for to-day! Drive me back hence to my rooms".
>
> Driving in the park on another occasion, he saw a sick man, suffering and very ill, 'fallen and weltering in his own water, by some being lifted up, by others being dressed.' "That man, good charioteer, what has he done that his eyes are not like others' eyes, nor his voice like the voice of other men?" asked the prince. "He is what is called ill, my lord",—replied the charioteer. "But what is meant by 'ill'?"—asked the prince again. "It means, my lord, that he will hardly recover from his illness." "But am I too then, good charioteer, subject to fall ill? Am I within the reach of illness?" "Yes, my lord, and so we all are". "Why then, good charioteer, enough of the park for to-day! Drive me back hence to my rooms".
>
> On another occasion, driving out in his chariot, he saw a great concourse of people clad in garments of different colours constructing a funeral pyre. And seeing them, the prince asked the charioteer: "Why now are all those people come together in garments of different colours and making that pile?". "It is because some lord has ended his days", replied the charioteer. The prince ordered the chariot to be driven close to the corpse and had a good view of it, and asked: "What, good charioteer, is ending one's days?". "It means, my lord", the charioteer explained, "that neither mother nor father nor other kinsfolk will see him any more, nor will he ever again see them". "But am I too then subject to death, have I not got beyond the reach of death? Will neither the king nor the queen nor any other kindred see me any more nor I ever see them?" Hearing from the charioteer that it must

[9] In the Mahapad, related of Vipassī. See Dial,, pt. ii, pp. 18–23. Abridged in the extract given.

be so, he ordered him to drive back to his rooms, as on the previous occasions.

On the fourth and the last occasion, however, he saw something different. It was a shaven-headed man, a religious wanderer, wearing the yellow robe of his Order. On seeing him, he asked the charioteer: " That man, good charioteer, what has he done that his head is unlike other men's heads and his clothes too are unlike those of others ? " The charioteer told him that he was called a wanderer (*Bhikkhu*), ' because he is one who has gone forth '. " What is that to have ' gone forth ' ? " asked the prince. " To have gone forth, my lord," answered the charioteer, " means being thorough in religious life, thorough in the peaceful life, thorough in good action, thorough in meritorious conduct, thorough in harmlessness, thorough in kindness to all creatures ". The prince heard and delightedly exclaimed: " Excellent indeed, friend charioteer, is what they call a Wanderer ! "

The legend goes on further to relate that the prince accosted and made acquaintance with that Wanderer, and, when he went back to his rooms, a longing to enter upon the homeless state, in which he had seen the yellow-robed wanderer, came over his soul.

So compelling is the legend in its plausibility that it seems indeed to reproduce some story in popular tradition about the motive of Prince Gotama's renunciation of the world. The fundamental postulate of Buddhism, viz., that Sorrow (*Dukkha*) exists as an inherent property of life-process and its elimination must be the goal of spiritual effort, is here presented as self-realised by the Founder. Are we here on the track of biography ? The question is not quite free from doubt, for a plausible theory has been advanced by Dr. Thomas, on a critical collation of its different versions, that the Legend of the Four Signs is but a ' dramatization ' of what other legends say about the Lord's preoccupation in youth with thoughts of old age, suffering and death.[10] The theory does not quite preclude the possibility of existence of a story in popular tradition which perhaps has been improved upon by the legend-maker; for the last encounter with the wandering religious man is an obvious excrescence. It is conceived in the vein, which runs throughout the Pali canon, of glorifying the life and calling of the religious wanderer.

If the first three experiences recounted had brought home the Sorrow of human existence to Gotama's spirit, it would reach out naturally, without further prompting, to the problem

[10] See *Life*, pp. 58-59.

of finding the way out,—the path described as 'leading to cessation of Sorrow' (*Dukkha-nirodha-gāminī*).

* * * * *

For such would-be path-finders for humanity, the civilization of India, since immemorial antiquity, has prescribed the 'homeless' life. The Buddha was one of these 'homeless': with their life and community as it existed in northern India in his time, his fifty-one years' career was intimately mixed and bound up.

Should one seek after spiritual truth or the *summum bonum* of spiritual life, one must leave home and kin and society,—is a doctrine which seems peculiar to Indian thought. The act is technically called 'Going-forth' (*Pravrajyā*). It has been practised in India through all the ages of her history, and men from age to age have betaken themselves in this country to a life of mendicancy and wandering for religion's sake. Such men, living homeless, but in communities by themselves, have excited the lively curiosity of long generations of foreign visitors to India. Nothing parallel to this doctrine and custom is found in the religious thought or practice of other ancient civilizations.

The Greeks, who accompanied Alexander the Great on his Indian expedition in 327 B.C., had come to the country after gathering wide experience *en route* of oriental peoples, their customs and institutions. But they were struck with wonder to see those homeless men in northern India, a nondescript community, babbling philosophy and practising strange austerities. They had seen this kind of people nowhere else, east or west, and they invented for them a novel Greek name, Gymnosophists, 'naked philosophers', a strange order of men to them,—philosophers who had neither homes nor academies[11]!

A novel sight to the Greeks in the 4th century, B.C., within India itself they were already an ancient community; they are described especially in the ancient legends of both Buddhism and Jainism. The founders of these religions themselves

[11] References to Indian Gymnosophists abound in the Greek accounts of ancient India of which the surviving fragments have been collected in English translation by McCrindle in his well-known works, *The Invasion of India by Alexander the Great*, etc.

were of this community, and in the age of their advent, the community was already time-honoured, wide-spread and in great popular esteem. 'Homelessness' was decidedly a pre-Buddhistic institution, but probably post-Vedic, brought into existence by some obscure forces of social and cultural history.[12]

We find the institution recognised in the Brāhmaṇical system too, though, being anti-social in its nature, it is at odds with its whole ideological trend. A legend describes how, on the Buddha's first preaching mission in Magadha, there was an outcry against him and a propaganda that he intended 'to make families sonless and women widows and to cut off the line of succession'.[13] Yet 'Homelessness' is recognised in the Brāhmaṇical law-codes as a stage of life (*āśrama*), though the recognition is tardy and unwilling, for it is the condition of the pious householder that is exalted in their socio-religious scheme of life.[14]

The Brāhmaṇical recognition must have been *ex post facto*. Behind it was the fact that, outside the cultural sphere of Brāhmaṇism whose ancient stronghold was in the west of the Āryāvarta (ancient northern India), men had actually 'gone forth'—perhaps in larger numbers in the eastern regions,—had formed a distinct and recognised community by themselves, and risen as teachers and leaders of thought to a position of equality with the Brāhmaṇas. Their condition of life is admitted as the *Fourth Āśrama* in Brāhmaṇical sociology, though not recommended.

In the age that the Buddha-legends reflect, the leaders of religious thought and culture, never homogeneous nor confined to the Brāhmaṇical system alone in India, included not Brāhmaṇas only, but also these casteless, homeless, wandering teachers of religion. The Brāhmaṇas and the homeless religious men formed together in ancient India that 'natural *élite*', 'which better than all the rest represents the soul of the entire people, its great ideals, its strong emotions and its essential tendency and to which the whole

[12] My own theory of its origin is given in my book, *Early Buddhist Monachism*, in Ch. V. (*The Primitive Paribrājakas—A Theory of their Origin*).

[13] Maha, I, 24, 5.

[14] See EBM, p. 60, and the original passages quoted in the Appendix to the chapter, pp. 71 ff.

community looks as their example '.[15] A collective name for this 'natural *élite*' in ancient Indian life existed: it was *Samaṇa-Brāhmaṇa*, as in Buddhist and Jaina legends,[16] or *Brāhmaṇa-Samaṇa*, as in the edicts of Asoka.[17] Perhaps the Brāhmaṇas enjoyed more honour in the west and among a larger section of the population in Asoka's empire. So the Emperor puts them first in the compound, his outlook not being sectional or parochial as that of the monk legend-makers of the east, themselves of the *samaṇa* class. The position of a Brāhmaṇa was guarded by caste,—it was exclusive,—but anyone after entering the homeless community could work his way to the position of a *samaṇa*, which was equally that of a preceptor, preacher and religious leader.

The recruits to the homeless community are called by different names in Indian literature, emphasizing different aspects of that condition of life, viz., *Parivrājaka* ('Goer-forth', one who has *gone* from home into homelessness), *Sannyāsin* (One who has *cast off* wordly life), *Bhikkhu* (Mendicant), *Samaṇa* ('A *labourer* in spiritual life'), etc. These names seem to have been interchangeable at first, but later on they developed denominational *nuances*: we find the first two more commonly used in Brāhmaṇical literature to denote the homeless state and the last two more common in Buddhist and Jaina.[18]

* * * * *

The legends relate that, after the four encounters with the aged man, the sick man, the dead man and the wanderer, Prince Gotama renounced the world. The renunciation was not a negative act, not going into wilderness out of

[15] Quoted from Sir S. Radhakrishnan's *Hindu View of Life*, p. 92.

[16] The whole eighth chapter of the Saṁyutta Nikāya is devoted to a description from the Buddhist doctrinal point of view of the attainments of the Samaṇa-Brāhmaṇas. See DPP under *Samaṇa-Brāhmaṇa*.

[17] e.g., Kālsi Rock Edict, III; Girnār Rock Edict, IV, VIII, IX, XI; Delhi-Toprā Pillar Edict, VII, etc.

[18] The denomination, *Parivrājaka*, is common. But *Samaṇa* and *Bhikkhu* are Buddhist and Jaina terms, while *Sannyāsin* is Brāhmaṇical. But the terminology is not mutually exclusive. For instance both *Samaṇa* and *Bhikṣu* occur in Pāṇini in 2.1.70 ('Kumāra śramaṇādibhiḥ'), and 4.3.10 ('Bhikṣunata-sūtrayoḥ').

The Upaniṣad, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, mentions *Śramaṇa* in 4.3.22. Medhātithi, the classical commentator on the laws of Manu, refers to a *Śramaṇaka Sūtra* as authority on certain practices of the Brāhmaṇical Parivrājakas in his commentary on Manu, vi, 25.

disgust with life: it meant transition from one condition of life to another, from home to 'homelessness', from social status to the freemasonry of an institution which the thought of the age prescribed for all those who had spiritual problems to solve.

Having taken to *Pravrajyā*, young Gotama had now to 'wander forth'. For six years the wanderer's wayfaring continued until he settled down at Uruvelā for his final efforts and their consummation. No incident is taken in the legends from this period of the Lord's life. If tradition had retained any, it was not preserved by the legend-makers, for it was not the Superman's personal history they were primarily concerned with. The 'wayfaring' to them had a cultish significance,—the Lord's spiritual progression from the starting point of renunciation to the final goal of Buddhahood,[19] and it is in this abstract sense that the legends speak of the Lord's 'wayfaring'. Yet when the expression first found its way into the legends, it must have had a real and concrete reference,—to the long lonely trek from the wooded Himalayan foot-hills to the well-watered, many-citied plains of the south and the subsequent ramblings from place to place in the kingdom of Magadha.

It was along the downward course of the Gandak river that Gotama seems to have traced his way, leaving Kapilāvastu and the Sākya land behind. On the west of the river lay the kingdoms of Kośala and Kāśī; on the east and south-east Mithilā and Magadha. They were thriving kingdoms of that age situated in the fertile Gangetic valley, where life was fuller and richer and quicker in tempo than in the small sparsely populated tribal republics of the north.

Cities had sprung up in this area. The names of the most famous of them are strung together in the legends as in a bead-roll,—Campā, Rājagaha, Sāvatthi, Sāketa, Kosambī and Banaras. Gay, prosperous cities, they were types of a sensuous, care-free, primitive civilization, and in the conventional legendary description of them, they are said to have resounded night and day with 'ten cries'—the noise of elephants and the noise of horses and the noise of chariots;

19 'I for six years fared a faring of painful striving' (Brewster's translation, p. 45)—*Buddhavaṁsa*, XXVI.

the sounds of the drum, of the tabor and of the lute; the sound of singing, and the sounds of the cymbal and of the gong, and, lastly, the cry, 'eat, drink and be merry'.[20]

One intriguing feature of city-life is recorded in the legends, that recalls the ancient Greek institution of *Hetaerae*. A courtesan used to be formally installed to serve as the centre of the city's gaieties and enjoyments. Of these officially installed city-courtesans of the time, the most fascinating was one whom we shall see later in the ranks of the Buddha's disciples.

The legends relate her charms: a couple of verses in the anthology, *Theragāthā* (Psalms of the Elders) were originally meant by their composer, according to the ancient commentator on the work, to put the unwary among monks on their guard against her beauty's fascination.[21] Being one of the Lord's favourite disciples, she must have often been thrown into their company. "Beautiful, graceful, pleasant, gifted with the highest beauty of complexion, well-versed in singing, dancing and lute-playing, much visited by desirous people", she used to charge fifty *kahapanas* (silver coins) for one night's entertainment.[22] She was Ambapāli, the city-courtesan of Vesāli. A merchant of Rājagaha, who had visited Vesāli on business and saw her great influence with his own eyes there, is said to have approached the king of Magadha for permission to install a courtesan in Rājagaha, the Magadhan capital, too, and the royal assent having been obtained, he installed a woman named Sālavatī as the city-courtesan of Rājagaha. This Sālavatī became the mother of the renowned physician of the time, Jīvaka, prominent among the Buddha's followers.[23].

* * * * *

This was the obverse side of city-life of the age. Something, not so pronounced, appears on the reverse. In the cries of sensuous enjoyment, 'the still small voice' was not altogether

[20] See MahaP, for the names of the cities and the 'ten cries', v. 41, 44 (SBE., IX, p. 99, 101).

[21] "In the *Theragāthā* there are two verses which, according to tradition, were spoken by Ananda in admonition of monks who lost their heads at the sight of Ambapāli"—DPP, footnote under *Ambapāli*.

[22] Maha, VIII, I, 1 (VT, ii, p. 171).

[23] Maha, VIII, 1, 3 ff.

unheard. In the streets, lanes and alleys of a city, wandered religious mendicants with their saffron robes and begging bowls. They were treated with courtesy, respect and even reverence, for they were no ordinary beggars, and sometimes they gave sermons and sometimes engaged a group of citizens in casual conversation on the deeper things of the spirit. Wandering down alone to Magadha from his far-away home among the hills, Gotama was mixed up in this nondescript wandering company.

The Wanderers were a large and miscellaneous lot in Magadha when Gotama passed into it,—men recruited from all ranks of society, those who had performed the rite of *Pravrajyā* (Going-forth), passing from home into the state of homelessness. The rite comprised the renunciation of caste, kinship and social rank, the taking on of a distinctive robe and a begging bowl, and the adoption of a mode of resourceless, free and wandering existence. It was not, however, a condition of wilful vagabondage: it was supposed to be undertaken in quest of the higher life. A wanderer had, therefore, to profess a *dhamma*. The very reason and justification for his existence was the *dhamma* professed by him. The freedom, enjoyed by every member of the mendicant community, of individual choice and preference in the matter of *dhamma* bred in this community all sorts of doctrines and doxies and sects.

An interesting vignette, recurring in several legends, concretely represents the disputatiousness and proselytizing zeal of these wandering mendicants. It pictures a swelling crowd, entering through the city-gates of Sāvatthi,—'numerous mendicants, of various denominations, of various views, opinions, inclinations, doctrines and doxies', wounding one another with 'mouth-weapons' (*mukha-sattehi*, i.e., with sharp words).[24]

In this squabbling, contentious community, described in the legend, there were, however, some leading spirits. By their worth and influence, they attracted a following and were founders and leaders of sects. They enjoyed a preeminent position within the community and highest esteem

[24] *Jachandavaggo* of the *Udāna*, 4, 5, 6. Specimens of their doctrines and doxies are set forth and refuted in the *Brahmajāla Suttanta*, DN.

with lay people. The names of six leading *samaṇas* of this type, contemporary with the Buddha, side by side with brief accounts of the *dhamma* (doctrine) professed by each, are preserved in the legends[25]: Purāṇa (Venerable) Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla ('of the cow-pen', probably so called because he lived in a cow-pen), Kaccāna Pakudha ('of the Pakudha tree', under which probably he had his hut), Ajita Kesakambalī (of 'hairy blanket' which was his garment), Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta ('of the Belaṭṭhi clan') and Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta ('of the Nātha clan'). Each is described as the leader of a sect. For a fresh entrant to the mendicant order, the recognized practice, it seems, was to seek pupilage under a sect-leader. He is referred to by the honorific designation,—*Sanghī-gaṇī-gaṇācariyo* (i.e., leader, head and teacher of a Sect).[26]

An episode is recorded in one of the legends throwing some fresh light on this system of pupilage.[27] Sañjaya, we are told, was a *Sanghī-ganī-gaṇācariya*, at the head of two hundred and fifty mendicants, and in that body (*gaṇa*) of Sañjaya's adherents were two young men who were destined afterwards to be foremost among the Buddha's disciples, viz., Sāriputta and Moggallāna. These two happened to be attracted by the Buddha's teachings, and they communicated to their head, Sañjaya, their desire to transfer their spiritual allegiance to the other leader. The request was not unusual, for a wanderer had the freedom to choose and adopt what *dhamma* was most after his own heart. Sañjaya, apprehensive of defection from his party, offered, though in vain, to divide the leadership of the body with them.

About this new sect-leader, to whom he felt so strongly attracted, Sāriputta had heard from the mouth of a fellow-mendicant named Assaji. The two mendicants had come across one another quite casually and entered into a friendly conversation on the wayside:

Sāriputta (meeting Assaji on the way): "Under whose guidance, sir, have you accepted religious mendicancy? Who is

[25] Sāmaññaphala Sutta, DN, 2–7; MahaP. V. 60; Culla, V. 8, 1 and elsewhere.

[26] 'Sanghī-gaṇī-gaṇācariyo' is a conventional descriptive compound for a leader with a body of followers in the community of religious wanderers.

[27] Maha, I. 23.

your Master (*Satthā*)? Whose Doctrine (*Dhamma*) is after your heart?

Assaji: Sir, I have accepted religious mendicancy under the guidance of the great Samaṇa Sākyaputta, who passed on into the state of religious mendicancy from the Sākya clan. The same lord is my Master. I follow his Doctrine.

Sāriputta: What is your master's doctrine, sir? How is it named?

Assaji: Sir, I am a neophyte, newly ordained and recently admitted. I cannot explain exhaustively this doctrine and this rule. But I will explain its purport briefly.

With the self-same questions, as a different legend records, Upaka, a fellow mendicant, accosted the Buddha, meeting him on the way-side shortly after his 'enlightenment'.[28] It seems, therefore, to have been understood that a religious mendicant, especially if he were a neophyte, should place himself under a Master or Teacher (*Satthā*), accept his System of Faith (*Dhamma*), and if the master were a sect-leader (*Sanghī-gaṇī-gaṇācariya*), enlist as an adherent of that sect.

The Sāriputta-Assaji legend, besides throwing light on the custom of pupilage and sect-leadership in the wanderers' community, also conveys report of the rise of a new luminary in that order,—the wanderer who was known as hailing from the Sākya clan, who had come to the fore as a leading *samaṇa* and who was followed by a Sect in the wanderers' community.

His rise to that eminence had not been easy, but through 'search with many sighs', through painful experiments and sore bafflements. In the doctrine of the Buddha-cult, it is a process of striving which every aspirant to Buddhahood has to go through, and it has a cultish name, the 'Noble Quest' (*Ariya Pariyesaṇa*).[29] The legends describe how this quest was gone through by Gotama from its first tentative beginnings to the sublime finality.

* * * * *

Wandering about in Magadha, Gotama had sought, according to the custom of mendicant neophytes, for a Master (*Satthā*), and the first whom he approached was Ālāra Kālāma. He studied Ālāra Kālāma's doctrine assiduously, but it was not after his heart. The next whom he approached was

[28] Maha, I, 6, 7.
[29] Ariya-pariyesaṇa Sutta, MN (26).

Uddaka, but he was similarly disappointed. The repeated disappointments seem to have thrown him back on his own resources.

Resolved to evolve a *dhamma* out of the efforts of his own spirit rather than receive one from the hand of a Master, he "passed through the land of Magadha from place to place and came near to the village of Uruvelā ".[30] A great modern temple now marks the holy site.[31]

What the legends report of his efforts and experiments at Uruvelā has a background in Indian religio-philosophical thought of the age. From 'doctrine', which he had sought from Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka, Gotama seems to have turned in the recoil of his keen disappointment to 'spiritual practice', of which there were two approved modes in that age, viz., *Yoga* and *Tapas*. The former means the process of obtaining full control of the organs of mind[32]; the latter mortification of the flesh with the object that the disburdened spirit within may acquire supra-physical powers. Gotama experimented first with *Yoga*.

On Yoga practice, the classic source of our knowledge is the 'Yoga aphorisms', of Patañjali, which, composed perhaps many centuries later than the Buddha's time,[33] must have been based on ideas and practices at least as old. The work only brings into a philosophic system what were traditional beliefs and practices of the Yogins. In India Yogins have always existed,—men who abstract themselves from life's normal activities and concentrate intensely on mind-control in order to attain a higher plane of existence or develop psychic or spiritual powers. The type appears in Indian civilization from its remotest antiquity. It has even been supposed that its origin goes back beyond the advent of the Aryan in India, for, among the relics of the pre-Aryan civilization of Mohenjo-dāro and Harappā, an engraved figure has been found of a Yogin practising the Yogic control.

One of the eight parts (*aṅgas*) of Yoga practice consists in

[30] Ibid. (See F-Dial, I, p. 117).
[31] ASR (1908–9) by Dr. Bloch on Gaya, p. 144 and photograph at p. 143.
[32] 'Yogascittavritti-nirodhaḥ' (Patañjali, I, 1).
[33] The standard translation of the text of Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtra* is by Prof. J. H. Woods (*Yoga System of Patañjali*, Harvard Series, Vol. 17). According to Woods, it was written in the 4th or 5th century A.D.

controlling the body's respiratory activity (*Prāṇāyāma*) which is thus explained by Patañjali:

> "Controlling the motion of the exhalation and inhalation is *Prāṇāyāma* (Ch. II, 49). "Its modifications are either 'external' or 'internal', or 'motionless', regulated by place, time and number, either long or short (*Ibid*, 50)."[34]

The process of respiration-control is divided in Yoga practice into three specific controls—(i) control of exhalation (*Recaka*), (ii) control of inhalation (*Pūraka*) and (iii) rendering life-breath motionless (*Kumbhaka*).[35]

In the legends of the Pali canon which describe the austerities gone through by the Lord before his Enlightenment, the Yogic practice of *Prāṇāyāma* by him is described,—how 'he held the in-breathings and out-breathings of the mouth, nose and ear', and, while in that condition, felt 'violent winds tearing at his belly and a sensation as though his stomach were being carved with a butcher's carving knife: there was a violent burning in the body as though he were being rolled down into a ditch full of burning coals'.[36]

The legend, standing by itself, is no proof of the actuality of Gotama's Yogic practices. But it is curious that all the makers of the Buddha-legends presume that the Lord was a Yogin, having acquired exactly those supernatural powers and superhuman accomplishments which, according to Patañjali, accrue from the practice of Yoga. They are described in chapter III of Patañjali's work,[37] and several of them find illustration in the Buddha-legends:

(Sūtra 38) The Yogin by his knowledge of the channels of activity (of the nerves) can enter another's body. (So the Lord is said to have entered the body of Ananda and through that body delivered his discourses.[38]).

(,, 39) The Yogin does not sink in water or in swamps and can walk on thorns, etc., and can die at will. (So the Lord, on his last missionary tour, crossed the Ganges at Pāṭaligāma miraculously while the the river was in spate. At Cāpāla Cetiya in Vesāli

[34] See *Yoga-sūtras of Patañjali* (Bombay Sanskrit and Prakrit Series, XLVI, 2nd Ed.), p. 113.
[35] See Mādhavācārya's *Sarva-darśana-saṁgraha*, tr. by Cowell and Gough in Trūbner's Oriental S., p. 264.
[36] *Mahāsaccaka Sutta*, MN, 36. See Brewster, pp. 34.
[37] See *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, pp. 161 ff.
[38] See *infra*, pp. 220–221.

he willed his own death several months ahead of the event.[39]

(„ 40) The Yogin is surrounded by a blaze of light. (Several legends refer to the effulgence of light from the Lord's body.)

(„ 41) The Yogin has divine hearing, i.e., the power of clairaudience. (This is attributed to him in the *nidāna* of the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta*[40] and elsewhere.)

(„ 43) The Yogin has the power of 'disembodying' himself and melting into light. (This is referred to in the legend in which the Lord speaks of his visiting assemblies of celestials as well as of men, "becoming in colour like unto their colour and in voice like unto their voice", and vanishing after the discourse, leaving the audience wondering.[41])

(„ 48) The Yogin can command extreme rapidity of physical movement,—of the same rapidity as that of the mind. (This is illustrated by the story in the *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta*, already referred to, of the Lord's crossing the Ganges. He is said to have crossed it "as instantaneously as a strong man would stretch forth his arm and draw it back again", and vanished from one bank, re-appearing instantly on the opposite.)

Much of the miraculous elements in the legends derive from the tradition, which must have been prevalent among the early legend-makers, of the Lord having at one stage of his career perfected himself in Yoga practice. But evidently dissatisfied with its results, he proceeded next to the practice of *Tapas*. Of the numerous forms of *Tapas*, he chose what was rather an elementary one,—abstention from food,—perhaps by way of an initial experiment.

The same legend which describes the Lord's 'breath-holding' exercises, also describes the process of his fasting which was gradual, taking less and less nourishment till it was only 'as much as will go into the hollow of two joint hands of bean-soup or pea-soup or lentil soup'. The extreme emaciation of Gotama's body from long fasting is a *motif* in Indo-Hellenistic sculpture. In rendering it, the grim details of the legend are reproduced by the sculpture with masterly fidelity[42]:

[39] MahaP, I, 33 (SBE, XI, p. 21, and III, 10 (SBE, XI, p. 44).
[40] See *infra*, p. 188, fn. 20.
[41] MahaP, III, 22 (SBE, XI, p. 48).

> Like dried canes now became my arms and legs, withered through this extremely scanty diet; like the foot of a camel became my buttock; like a string of beads became my spinal column with the vertebræ protruding. Just as the roof-beams of an old house sharply protrude, so protruded my ribs; just as in a deep well the little water-stars (?) far beneath are scarcely seen, so now in my eye-balls the sunken pupils were hardly seen; just as a gourd freshly cut becomes empty and withered in the hot sun, so now became the skin of my head empty and withered. When I wished to touch my belly, I reached to the back of my spine, and when I wished to touch my spine, I again reached to the belly,—thus near had come my belly to my spinal column. To reinforce this body, I chafed the limbs with the hand and the badly rooted hair fell from the skin. So strangely was the pure colour of my skin affected by the scanty diet that some said, "The ascetic Gotama is black", while others said, "The ascetic Gotama is yellow". Then this thought came to me: This is the uttermost; beyond this one cannot go.[43]

As he had discarded the luxuries of his princely life at Kapilāvastu, so he abandoned also the austerities of *Yoga* and *Tapas* practice. "There are two extremes, monks," a legend reports him saying to the five monks he first met after the Enlightenment, "which he, who has given up the world, ought to avoid. What are these two extremes? A life given to pleasure, devoted to pleasures and lusts: this is degrading, sensual, vulgar, ignoble, and profitless. And a life given to mortifications: this is painful, ignoble and profitless".[44]

The nature of the supreme spiritual experience he gained after eschewal of these mortifying practices, 'painful, ignoble and profitless', can never be truly known except to him to whom it came. But the legends assert that it was no intuitive experience: it was one strenuously reached through ascending stages of meditation (*Jhāna*),—his inner mind working itself gradually upwards to the realisation of an ultimate, absolute, cosmic Truth. The cult-name for the realisation is *Saṁbodhi*,—sublime knowledge, full comprehension, complete enlightenment,—and for the possessor thereof the name is *Buddha*, the Enlightened One.

But the contents of *Saṁbodhi* were defined in terms of

[42] See *Buddha Story*, p. 21 (No. 2099) and p. 23 (No. 87).
[43] Brewster, pp. 35–36.
[44] Brewster, p. 61.

doctrine by those who shaped the legends of the Lord's Enlightenment. Buddhism postulates that Sorrow (*Dukkha*) exists in all life-process and that the religion of the Lord is the only means of its elimination. The rise of the problem in the Lord's mind had been set forth in dramatic concreteness in the 'Legend of the Four Signs', and its final solution must needs, in the logical course, be embodied in the 'Enlightenment Legend'. Hence *Saṁbodhi* is identified with the discovery of that doctrine which is the foundation of Buddhist thought and philosophy—the Chain of Causation (*Paticca-samuppāda*), expounding the origin of Sorrow and the cessation thereof.[45] But it is a purely a monkish figment,—this interpretation of *Saṁbodhi* in terms of doctrine,—as Dr. Thomas has shown by a collation of various legendary versions of the event.[46]

* * * * *

A silent witness in the background to these strenuous experiments and their final issue and consummation is said in the legends to have been a Tree, an Aśvattha (*Ficus Religiosa*). For his *Yoga* and *Tapas* practices the Lord is said to have taken its shelter at Uruvelā, nor left it till the final attainment, *Saṁbodhi*.

Round it centres a cult in Buddhism. We see the cult already developed in the *Lalitavistara* in the worship of this Holy Tree.[47] The sign of it corresponds in Buddhism in sanctity and significance to the sign of the Cross in Christianity.

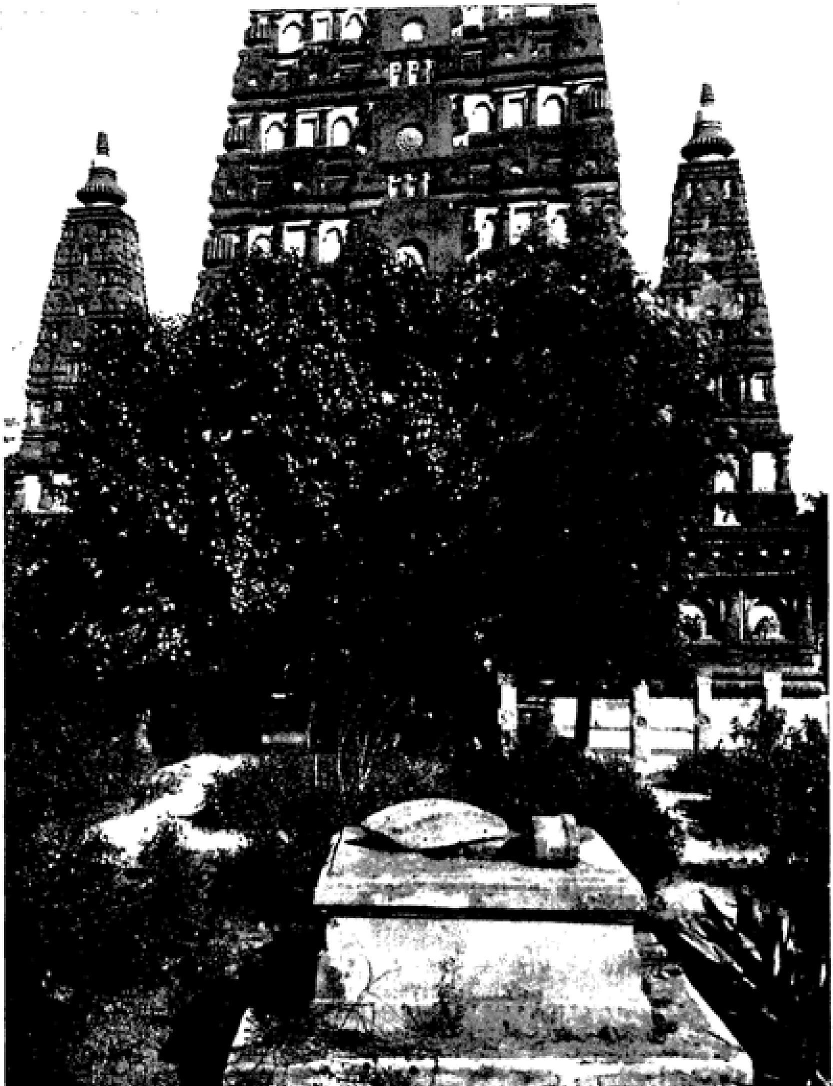
But could this Aśvattha tree of the legend be in the real background and did it come into the legend from some actual, pre-legendary Buddha-tradition? The answer is better in the negative. If it were in popular belief, when legend-making in Buddhism started, that a tree at Uruvelā had given its shade and shelter to the Lord during that crisis in his career, it would have been reproduced in *all* the legends. But the only one in the Pali canon which gives the most continuous and circumstantial account of the Lord's austerities makes no reference to any tree, speaking only of 'a delightful spot

[45] See HBT, ch. V on 'Buddhist Philosophy', pp. 96–105.
[46] See *Life*, pp. 75–80.
[47] See *Lal*, pp. 288–289.



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

THE LORD ON FAST (CĀNDRĀYAṆA)
(From a Lahore Museum stone)



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

THE BODHI TREE WITH THE BUDDHAGAYA TEMPLE BEHIND

(in Uruvelā) with a pleasant grove and a river flowing by with clear water and convenient fords '.[48] The silence about a Holy Tree is significant: it would have been caught in the legend, had it featured in the original Buddha-tradition. The 'Bodhi Tree' seems rather a concept evolved out of primitive Indian 'tree-cult'.

In India holiness is attributed to different species of trees, either for their medicinal or magical properties or as dwelling places of gods. Prominent among these holy species of trees is the Aśvattha. It is called 'the seat of the gods' (*devasadana*) in one of the verses of the *Atharva Veda*, and from an Aśvattha tree growing in the 'third heaven', the gods are said to have won the medicinal plant, *Kustha*, and obtained the taste of nectar.[49] In folklore and folk religions, as well as in cultured religions, the tree-cult takes in India a variety of forms,[50] and in Buddhism it took the form of 'Bodhi Tree', i.e., a Tree sanctified by attainment of Buddhahood under it.

In this form it appears in the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta* in which seven Buddhas, including Gotama Buddha, are stated to have attained to Buddhahood, each under a different species of tree.[51] Thus set up as a cult, it has sometimes an embroidery of older animistic notions both in text and in stone. Thus a tree-goddess is associated with the Aśvattha tree of the Buddhist cult. She figures in sculptured representation[52]; and one legend fables four gods, coming out of the Tree to greet the Buddha after his Enlightenment.[53]

When the cult provided the Lord with a 'Bodhi Tree', its identification with an actual Aśvattha tree at Uruvelā, worshipped by local folk, was only a question of time. It seems to have been complete before the time of Asoka whom

[48] Mahāsaccaka Sutta, MN (No. 36).

[49] Atharva-veda, V. 4, 3. See Whitney's *Atharva-veda Saṁhitā* (Harvard Oriental Series), p. 227, where the verse is translated. I have ventured to alter Whitney's translation of '*Cakṣana*' as 'sight' to 'taste' and '*Amṛta*' as 'immortality' to 'nectar'.

[50] See IHQ, Vol. XIX (1943)—N. Chaudhuri's *Pre-historic Tree-cult* in which the Indian tree-cult is traced beyond the Vedas to the pre-Aryan civilization of Harappā and Mohenjodāro.

[51] Dial, pt. ii, p. 6; *infra*, p. 190.

[52] See Dr. Bloch's ASR (1907–8). Dr. Bloch has argued with some plausibility that this tree-goddess was indentified with and presented as Sujātā in the legends (*Ibid.*, Footnote, 24).

[53] This is a legend in the *Lalitavistara*; see Lal, p. 401–402. The four tree-gods are named Dharma-ruci, Dharma-kāma, Dharma-mati, Dharma-cāri,—obviously invented and colourless names.

a legend represents as taking particular care of the Holy Tree flourishing at the site.[54]

Primitive Indian Buddhist pilgrims must have seen a sacred Aśvattha worshipped on their visits to Uruvelā. "That must be the Tree of our Lord", thought they in their simple-minded piety, and so was this tree 're-christened' and re-invested with a new sanctity as the Bodhi-tree of the legend. It is a very ancient, certainly pre-Asokan, myth enshrined in Buddhism.

Between the Lord's Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree and the commencement of his preaching mission, the legends interpose an intermediate stage when he was assailed by doubts and hesitations, whether to rest content with his own enlightenment or to share it with mankind, and it was only when these doubts were resolved that he determined to preach his *dhamma* to the world,—to become a *Satthā* (Teacher). We shall see later how this legend represents only a development in the cult-concept of the Buddha,[55] but it laid the foundation for a distinction between the two personalities, the 'enlightened one' who is a *Buddha*, and 'one who by his teachings imparts his enlightenment to mankind' who is a *Sammā-saṁbuddha*,—the Lord himself, the central figure of the legends, the object of the cult, being *Sammā-saṁbuddha*.

The whole Buddha-story, thus viewed in the *milieu* which the legends themselves help assemble, wears a convincing aspect of reality. However romanticised and heightened by the cult, it is at bottom the simple life-story of a religious wanderer of the age. He had drifted alone into Magadha from the far-off north; out of the travail of his own spirit, had evolved a new *Dhamma*; preached it among men and gathered a following in the wanderers' community in which he founded and led a sect, and this sect was denominated after him as the *Sākyaputtiya Samaṇas*. This name for the first Sect of Buddhists, just a sect of 'wanderers', is of common usage in the legends,—perhaps it is caught there as one out of the many flotsams from the wreckage of pre-legendary tradition.

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[54] Div., pp. 397–398 which appears on a piece of sculpture on the eastern gate of the Sānchi Tope (See BBA, Plate X2.)

[55] See *infra*, pp. 203–204.

The first sermon in which the new *Dhamma* was preached is said to have been delivered in the Deer-park at Banaras.

Those who had actually heard that sermon, which was afterwards entitled the 'Turning of the Wheel of the Dhamma',[56] a wonderfully apt title, had perhaps been dead and cremated a couple of centuries or more when its textual version came to be compiled. It is only an abstract and synopsis of doctrines held by the monks at the time of its compilation and the title has no historical import.

That sermon in the Deer Park could hardly have been such an event at the time that its substance would be preserved for a hundred years and more in traditional memory, for such religious sermons by *samaṇas* were common in the towns and cities of that age. The only thing that could make it uncommon and memorable would be its intrinsic quality, but appraisement and appreciation of that quality would be proportionate to the progress and propagation of the cult itself. Whatever the sermon was and whatever its contents, it must have undoubtedly had especial power and appeal, for other contemporary teachers in the wanderers' community of the age had also turned 'the wheel of the Dhamma', but it was the Wheel set in motion in the Deer Park of Banaras that rolled forward fastest and farthest.

With this sermon, Gotama Buddha made his start on the long missionary career of more than half a century's duration, with the supposed episodes of which the legends of the Pali canon are replete. From those episodes not much of biographical value can be extracted. But they give us a true sense and impression of the initial progress of the faith.

Disciples come in small batches; a body of them grows up, recognized by the people as 'followers of the Sākyaputta Samaṇa'; the personal name is not used by his followers in referring to him, but he is called *Bhagavā*, *Tathāgata* or *Buddha*, suggesting that he is already about to become the centre of a cult; a distinct sect in the wanderers' community is born which has embraced his *dhamma* and looks up to him as *Satthā*; this sect grows in numerical strength as the Lord, in the company of his followers, passes on foot from town to town and village to village. His fame as founder of a new

[56] Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana-sutta in AN.

dhamma spreads abroad. Kings, potentates and merchant-princes befriend and patronize him and his monk followers in the cities, bringing them suitable gifts, donating parks and gardens for their accommodation, arranging for their reception and residence. But the Lord, having embraced the wanderer's life and calling, stays not, but travels on from the crowded city, abroad through the sparse countryside. He comes in touch with the life and thought of humbler folk. He spends nights at wayside inns, gives discourses in the rural assembly-halls, stops now and then for a few hours to partake of the hospitality of a devotee along with his followers and disciples who are always in his train, except when the Lord wants to spend an hour in solitary meditation. People of all sorts and conditions seek interviews which are readily granted. Then again he is seen to move on.

The picture is true to life, but its lineaments cannot be reduced to narrower definition. What the actual, as distinguished from the legend-reported, preachings of the Lord were; whether in his preachings, he had one set of instructions for his sect, for the *Sākyaputtiya Samaṇas*, and another for the common people; whether already in his lifetime he had made the beginnings of the organization of his Sect into an Order; how far the doctrines which are propounded in the legendary discourses in his name were his own; whether in the eyes of people he had even in his lifetime become already the kind of Superman the legends report him to be,—are all problems to which the legends provide uncertain clues or none at all.

But out of the legends a personality undoubtedly comes to light. It shows, even through the veil of its cultish and superhuman glorification, a human side, so individual, so distinguished by personal traits, that the conception of it must be referred to some persistent traditional memory projecting into the legends.

We sometimes find the Lord, surrounded by his disciples, sitting in utter silence; sometimes he delivers himself not in a discourse, but in short pithy sayings, 'pointed, abrupt and fiery'; sometimes he refuses to answer questions at all; sometimes, as in his talks with Ananda during his last rain-retreat at Beluva, he grows reminiscent. He does not seem

to suffer fools gladly and delights in an occasional pun or in turning the tables on a too argumentative interlocutor. Do we discover in these peculiarities with which cult has nothing to do 'the very man,—the live, the heard, the seen?'

The final impression of him that is left by the legends on the mind hardly corresponds to the familiar Buddha-image,—the calm, the immobile, the sedentary world-forgetting Yogin with the Yogin's downcast half-shut eyes. Something keen and dynamic is felt about the man which cannot be better conveyed than in the following words of Mrs. Rhys Davids:

> "When he spoke, how brief are the sayings that seem to be of actual utterances as distinct from the preachments with more or less pronounced monastic tendency! We cannot sense the wondrous will-power of him that will have made itself felt in every sentence, in the message of those blue eyes. We can only trace it here and there in some hammer-like idiom: 'Enough, enough!', 'Let be, let be!' or in the frequent gestures that supplemented the deficient stock of will-words, what a living dynamo he will have been,
>
> 'Who laid his hand upon my head and took
> My arm and to the garden led me back——
> And in compassion to me gave'—(*Therīgāthā*, XXXVI)
>
> or who took leaves or dust in hand as object-lessons, or who pictured supernormal will by clenched fist and outshot arm . . . (But he is also) a lone muser in the woods, and in the woods happily resting, filled with compassion for all things".[57]

[57] *Manual*, pp. 256–257.

IV

THE END OF A MAN

IF WE hold with Rhys Davids that the Buddha-legends commenced about fifty years after the Lord's decease at Kusinārā and that they were preceded by a current 'Gotama-Buddha' tradition in the region where the legends were being made, the most reliable and historical part of the tradition must have been that relating to the end of his career.

When the Buddha propounded his *dhamma* after his lonely meditations at Uruvelā, he was but one among several *dhamma*-founders like Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, Makkhali Gosāla and other leading *samaṇas* in the wanderers' community of the time; when he made the public declaration of it in the Deer Park of Banaras, his sermon was just one of many such sermons lay people used to hear from the lips of the *samaṇas*. But the Lord's prolonged missionary tours and repeated visits to cities, of which we hear in the legends, must have brought him into the limelight of fame. Perhaps, towards the close of his long career, his own sect in the wanderers' community was already established in popular esteem and his lay followers could be counted by thousands. The passing away of such a famous teacher and illustrious founder of a *dhamma* would be an event long remembered; it would be put into songs and ballads by his followers; it would be propagated among the people, and live and linger at least for two generations in folk memory.[1]

It was on this living tradition that the legends of the *Mahāparinibbāna* ('The Great Passing-away') drew largely for the circumstances and incidents. In the legends themselves, we find some odd scraps of the original tradition retained.

[1] The same view is held by Winternitz who says: "It is quite comprehensible that the memory of the latter part of the Master's life and of his last speeches was most firmly impressed on the minds of the disciples of the Buddha, and that these have been preserved, handed down with loving fidelity" (Winternitz, II, p. 39).

There are several versions, but without any substantial disagreement, of the *Mahāparinibbāna* legends,[2] the version in the Pali canon of the Theravāda school being most complete, consistent and well-knit, giving a continuous narrative account of the last seven months of the Lord's career on earth.

The final redaction, however, in which the account has come down to us, is a conglomeration of legends, a great mosaic of varied materials,—episodes, discourses, marvels, myths and miracles, inset abstracts of the cult and its doctrinal categories,—all, however, within a single and consistent narrative framework. It is entitled *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta*, DN, 'Book of the Great Decease', and in its extant form yields internal evidence of having been compiled during the age of the Maurya emperors of Magadha,—at least a couple of centuries after the events. Perhaps in its present form, the 'book' is not earlier than the reign of Emperor Asoka.[3]

On a critical analysis of its contents, Prof. Winternitz discovered in it 'five strata of literary development', and, in his opinion, the *Suttanta*, as it stands, 'is very probably a late and enlarged version of a very old and much shorter '*Parinibbāna Sutta*'.[4] The narrative framework must have been taken from the older version which probably antedated the extant enlarged text by a century or more.

In the 'book' there are a few stray fragments of verse which turn on the incidents of the very last lap of the tour, —from Pāvā to Kusinārā. The orthodox commentator, Buddhaghosa, puzzles over them,—they stand out so distinct from the prevailing style and tone of the legends,—and he suggests in explanation of the discrepancy that they were verses sung by the Theras when they were settling the canon by recital of the legends at the first assembly of monks at Rājagaha.[5] They are plain and unadorned, describing in a style, pedestrian and different from that of the legends, a

[2] See *Das Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (in German) by Waldschmidt, 1950–'51. Four texts of the Sūtra are collated in Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan and a German translation of the Chinese text of the Vinaya of the Mūla-sarvāsti-vādins. The original text of this Vinaya has been found among the Gilgit MSS, discovered in Kashmir, and has been edited. See *Gilgit Manuscripts*, ed. by Nalinkasha Dutt, Vol. 3, Srinagar, 1942–'47.

[3] See *infra*, p. 169.

[4] Winternitz's review of *The Dialogues of the Buddha* in JASB (1911), pp. 1150–1151. Also see Winternitz, Vol. II, p. 39.

[5] MahaP, IV, 23, 52 and 56.

human situation without didactic motive or supernatural embroidery. They read very much like snatches from popular ballads,—seemingly the precipitate of a fading oral tradition, caught by chance in the legend and allowed to remain untransformed.

* * * * *

It is at Rājagaha, the capital of Magadha at the time, that the *Suttanta* narrative commences, with an official visit to the Buddha by the prime-minister of Ajātasattu, the contemporary king of Magadha. The object of the visit is to consult the Lord about the fortunes of a military expedition against the bordering Vajji tribe which the king has just planned and is about to put into execution. The Buddha, not only predicts the failure of the expedition, but calls almost simultaneously an assembly of the citizens of Rājagaha where, with topical reference, he expatiates on the 'conditions of social welfare' (*Aparihāniyā dhammā,* meaning literally 'conditions of insurance against adversity'). Among the Vajjis, he declares, these conditions subsist, and the Lord, therefore, prophesies success for them against the projected expedition by the king. It was a bold outspoken speech which must have jarred on the king and his counsellors.

Rājagaha, it seems, was in the grip of a war-fever then. Perhaps the Lord, with his sympathies all with the Vajjis, found the prevailing atmosphere somewhat uncongenial, perhaps a trifle oppressive. So, after a brief stay at Rājagaha, he left the city on a tour abroad and proceeded northwards to Nālandā, a few miles distant, and kept on in the northerly direction. The Ganges lay across the route and the Lord crossed it (—a miracle is introduced here) at the place where Pāṭaliputra, then a village called Pāṭaligāma, destined to be the new capital of Magadha, was, in view of impending events, being built and fortified. From historical sources it is known that Chandragupta made it his capital in the 4th century, B.C., and the prophecy about its future greatness which the legend puts here into the mouth of the Buddha serves to date this passage within the Maurya era.

The next move of the Lord and his party was to Koṭigāma and thence to Vesāli, the chief city of the Licchavi clan.

The Licchavis were devoted followers of the Lord, and among them was the famous city-courtesan, Ambapāli, a woman of great wealth and influence who owned and lived in a mansion. On the occasion of this visit, the Licchavis vied with one another for the honour of entertaining the Buddha and his party. The Lord, however, had already consented to accept the hospitality of the courtesan at Vesāli. The people were scandalised. Having failed to persuade Ambapāli to forego the honour in their favour, they made a direct approach to the Lord with the request: "May the Blessed One do us the honour of taking his meal, together with the brethren, at our house to-morrow!"

But the Lord could not oblige them. "O Licchavis", said he, "I have promised to dine with Ambapāli. The Licchavis cast up their hands, sore with disappointment, exclaiming in chagrin: "We are outdone by this Mango-girl! We are outdone by this Mango-girl!"

It was a derisive pun on the courtesan's name which meant 'mango-grower'. She probably owned orchards of mango-trees. Hsüan-tsang, visiting 'the kingdom of Vesāli', a thousand years after, notes mango and banana as common fruits in that part of the country.[6] Ambapāli,—the innuendo ran,—was just as common as mango in Vesāli. Yet it was on this common woman, the courtesan, that the Lord had preferred to bestow the much coveted honour!

How this favoured 'mango-girl' of Vesāli entertained the company with her simple, but warm-hearted and graceful hospitality is best told in the unadorned, yet dignified words of the legend itself:

> Ambapāli the courtesan made ready in her mansion sweet rice and cakes, and announced the time to the Blessed One, saying: "The hour, Lord, has come and the meal is ready!"
>
> And the Blessed One robed himself early in the morning and took his bowl, and went with the Bhikkhus to the place where Ambapāli's dwelling house was. And when he had come there, he seated himself on the seat prepared for him. And Ambapāli the courtesan set the sweet rice and cakes before the company with the Buddha at their head, and waited upon them till they refused any more.
>
> And when the Blessed One had quite finished his meal, the

[6] See Beal, Vol. II, p. 66: "The *āmra*-fruit (mango) and the *mochā* (banana) are very plentiful and much prized".

courtesan had a low stool brought, and sat down at his side, and addressed the Blessed One and said: "Lord, I present this mansion to the Order of mendicants of which the Buddha is the chief". And the Blessed One accepted the gift; and, after instructing, and rousing, and inciting, and gladdening her with religious discourse, he rose from his seat and departed thence.[7]

The Ambapāli episode, so full of humanity, so redolent of the antique piety of the age, is like a purple patch in this account of the Lord's last missionary tour.[8]

She drops here out of the canonical story and her after-career is enveloped in legend and romance. The ancient commentator on the *Therīgāthā*, an anthology of verses by Buddhist nuns, relates the legend that Ambapāli had a son who became a monk and rose to the position of *Thera* ('Elder') in the brotherhood. He was a charming speaker, and it so happened that at one of his sermons his mother was among the audience. The sermon so worked upon her mind that a longing for the higher life came over her and she renounced the world and embraced the life of a nun.

In the *Therīgāthā* itself, a poem is ascribed to Ambapāli, in which she sits contemplating, in the manner of Villon's 'Fair Amouress', her own ageing body[9]:

> "Shone of yore this body as shield of gold well-polished;
> Now with the waste of the years all covered with net-work of wrinkles."

But Ambapāli's 'complaint' runs in a different vein and to a different mood; the thought of the decay of her charms leads on to the deeper thought of the impermanence of all things. She attains ultimately to Arhatship.

The story, a very late one, may be pure romanticizing, but, whatever her earthly fate, by that one act of devotion and hospitality to the Lord, she is placed for ever by the side of her of Magadala who also was saved for 'a beautiful moment

[7] SBE. (Vol. XI), p. 33.

[8] The story of Ambapāli's entertainment of the Buddha occurs also in Mahāvagga, vi, 30, but the venue there is Koṭigāma. Oldenberg comments on the discrepancy: "The words are nearly identical in both places, but in the 'Book of the Great Decease' the account occurs in its proper place in the middle of a connected narrative, whereas in the *Mahāvagga*, a treatise on the Rules and Regulations of the Order, it seems strangely out of place" (SBE, Vol. XI, p. XXXIV).

[9] See *Psalms of the Sisters* (PTS) by Mrs. Rhys Davids, pp. 120–125.

in her life': "Mary Magdalen, when she sees Christ, breaks the rich vase of alabaster that one of her seven lovers had given her and spills the odorous spices over his tired dusty feet, and for that one moment's sake sits for ever with Ruth and Beatrice in the tresses of the snow-white rose of Paradise".[10]

* * * * *

From Vesāli, the Lord went down to the neighbouring village of Beluva. It was within easy reach of the city, situated on a slope near the foot of a hill. A halt had to be made there as it was the commencement of the rains.

An ancient custom among the wanderers, to which we shall have occasion to refer again later, was to go into residence during the rainy season, and it was observed as a ceremonial occasion by all sects in the community.[11] So for three months the party had to sojourn at Beluva for the *Vassa*, as it was called.

During this period there fell upon the Lord 'a dire sickness' and 'sharp pains came upon him even unto death'. He was eighty years of age now and his followers were alarmed that he might expire all too suddenly. He recovered, however, from the illness this time, and when he had sufficiently come round, Aṇanda, his chief disciple, anxious for the future of the Order after the Lord's death, entreated him to frame some rules for its guidance. This the Lord firmly refused to do. He was fully aware of his own frail physical condition: "I am now grown old and full of years and my journey is drawing to its end. I have reached my sum of days. I am turning eighty years of age; and just as a worn-out cart can be made to move along only with much additional care, so methinks my body can only be kept going with much additional care". But he thought that his followers in his absence should not look for outside guidance, but act on their own judgment and conviction, relying on *Dhamma* alone.

During this rain-residence at Beluva, the Lord, though feeble and worn, used every morning, observing the mendicant's custom, to robe himself, and 'taking his bowl in the

[10] Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis*.
[11] See *infra*, pp. 66–67.

robe', go into the neighbouring city of Vesāli for alms. He found Vesāli with its many mounds (*cetiyas*) a lovely and delightful place. But his mind was not perfectly at peace; it was crossed by presentiments of his coming end, and the legend weaves out of them an elaborate supernatural tale,—how Māra, the Evil One, tempted him to pass out of life, how he firmly resisted the temptation and how he made up his mind at last, while resting on the mound Cāpāla, to forego the due remainder of his days, and a great earthquake arose to give Ananda sudden warning of it.

Much of his conversation was with Ananda during his convalescence at Beluva, and his mind, just a little relaxed and softened by recent physical suffering, dwelt gently on the reminiscences of his past and the delightful spots of the earth he had visited in his many peregrinations. 'On one occasion, Ananda, I was resting under the Shepherd's Nigrodha (Ficus Indica) tree on the bank of the river Neranjarā'; 'on one occasion, Ananda, I was in the Banyan Grove at Rājagaha; again at the Robbers' Cliff; again at the Sattapaṇṇi Cave, etc., in the same city'; 'On one occasion, Ananda, I was residing at the mound of Udena at Vesāli';—so ran the tenor of his reminiscential talks.

In their tender human appeal, these inconsequential talks to Ananda at Beluva have hardly a parallel in the legends: they are so touched with a mild pathos, a serenity of resignation, 'a sober colouring from an eye that hath kept watch o'er man's mortality'. The legend has it that it was at Beluva that he made the prophecy that only three months remained of his earthly existence.

The Lord was charmed with Vesāli,—so beautiful a city and so devoted to him. He was loth to leave it, and when at last he had to resume his tour, he stood at the city-gate for a moment and cast a last long lingering look behind. An 'elephant look',—the legend describes it.[12] It means that he did not merely twist the neck to look back, but turned round full face and shoulders towards the city like an elephant turning the whole body round in order to look backwards. A little incident,—but did the devout people of Vesāli remember that last visit and that last 'elephant look' and

[12] MahaP, IV, 1—'Nāgāpalokitaṁ Vesālim apaloketvā'.

transmit the memory of it to their after generations? Long centuries later, more than a thousand years, Hsüan-tsang, visiting the ruins of Vesāli in A.D. 637, saw a mound supposed to commemorate that last 'elephant look'.[13] The memorial had been in existence at least two centuries before him and was known to Fa-hsien also.[14] It is not known how many centuries further back it dated.

* * * * *

So the city of Vesāli was left behind and the party proceeded through the countryside to Bhāṇḍagāma where a brief halt was made. Then several other places were passed on the route, Hatthigāma, Jambugāma and Bhoganagara which last was a little township, from where the party, after a brief sojourn, proceeded to Pāvā.

At Pāvā they were accommodated in a mango-grove by a devoted follower, named Cunda who belonged to a somewhat low caste, being an artisan or smith (*kumāraputta*) by profession. It so happened that he served some indigestible food, dried boar's flesh or some kind of roots, regarded perhaps as a delicacy by low-class people, at the congregational meal. The Lord, wishing not to hurt the host's susceptibilities, partook of it himself, while prohibiting it to others. He said to Cunda: "As to the *sūkara-maddava*,[15] you have made ready, serve me with it; and as to the other foods, sweet rice and cakes, serve the brethren with them". The meal over, the party left for Kusinārā.

* * * * *

For the octogenarian pedestrian, the journey from Pāvā to Kusināra was a feat most trying, excruciatingly painful, because the last meal at Cunda's house had brought on an acute attack of dysentery.

[13] Beal, Vol. II, p. 69.
[14] Beal, Vol. I, iii.
[15] It is usually translated, as in SBE. Vol. IX, as 'dried boar's flesh'. But Mrs. Rhys Davids says: "*Maddava* is nowhere else associated with meat. Literally *Sūkara-maddava* may mean 'Pig's joy'", and Mrs. Rhys Davids thinks that it is the root called 'pig-nut' (*Manual*, p. 260, footnote).

In an ancient Chinese translation of the *Suttanta*, the term is rendered as the 'stew of the ears of the sandal-wood tree', a kind of wood-fungus. (See *Sūkaramaddava and the Buddha's Death* by Fa Chow in *Annals of Bhadarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Silver Jubilee Volume, 1942, pp. 127–133).

About a dozen miles had to be covered, going south-west before their destination was reached.[16] It seems from the account that on this last lap of the journey the Lord was attended only by his chief disciple, Ananda. The season was now late autumn, more than three months having elapsed after the commencement of the rain-retreat at Beluva. The crops had been cut and taken, the fields were deserted, and few travelled along the cross-country roads. The streams had gone low: carts passed across them. Trudging on, sick and weary, through the lonely landscape, the Lord was oppressed with a terrible thirst, and, when they reached a streamlet, he asked insistently for water. The water was not fit to drink, having been befouled and muddied by cart-wheels that had crossed it, and Ananda urged the Lord to go a little farther to where the river Kakutthā flowed in a clear stream. But his thirst was raging, getting unbearable, and he had a drink of the muddy water,—although the legend would have it that it was made clear by a miracle for the Lord. The Kakutthā was still at some distance, and about eight miles distant from it lay their destination, Kusinārā, on the river Hiraññavatī (Golden Stream). They must go on.

The devoted disciple tenderly supported the exhausted, tottering octogenarian Master, encouraging him to step forward, and the only solitary traveller they came across on the way was a young man named Pukkusa of the Malla clan. The traveller must have noticed the condition of their clothes and, moved by pity, presented a pair of robes into which they presently changed. Clad in these new robes, they reached the bank of the river Kakutthā. The Lord quenched his thirst and had a bath in its pleasant limpid water and was somewhat refreshed. But the dysentery cruelly persisted. He knew that his last illness was upon him and advised Ananda that none should blame Cunda who had, without knowing, caused the fatal illness. After the last meal at Cunda's house at Pāvā, he had partaken of no solid food and had walked miles on end, harassed by the ailment and without any nourishment.

The small town of Kusinārā on the bank of the Hiraññavatī now came in sight, and the Lord asked Ananda to lead him

[16] The distance given is as calculated by Cunningham. See AGI, p. 498.

to a certain grove of *Sāla* trees there. This grove was situated in a park of the town which was the chief town of the Mallas ('Warriors'). It was most probably the month of December,—yet, when the last mile was covered, Kusinārā was reached, and the moribund body of the Lord, worn out with illness and long travel, laid in the grove on the riverside between two *Sāla* trees, the trees, says the legend, becoming suddenly aware, burst into masses of unseasonable bloom and showered down flowers on the blessed body.[17]

* * * * *

Over the dying body of the Lord hung Ananda in an ecstasy of heart-break, watching the ebbing away of life. The thought that one so great and so holy should expire at such an obscure and out-of-the-way township without due homage of honour and worship being paid in his last hour was a torture to his mind. "Let not the Blessed One", cried Ananda in passion, "die in this little wattle-and-daub town, in this town in the midst of jungles, in this branch township. For, Lord, there are other great cities, such as Campā, Rājagaha, Sāvatthi, Sāketa, Kosambī and Banaras. Let the Blessed One die in one of them. There are many wealthy nobles and Brāhmaṇas and heads of houses, believers in the Tathāgata, who will pay due honour to the remains of the Tathāgata".[18]

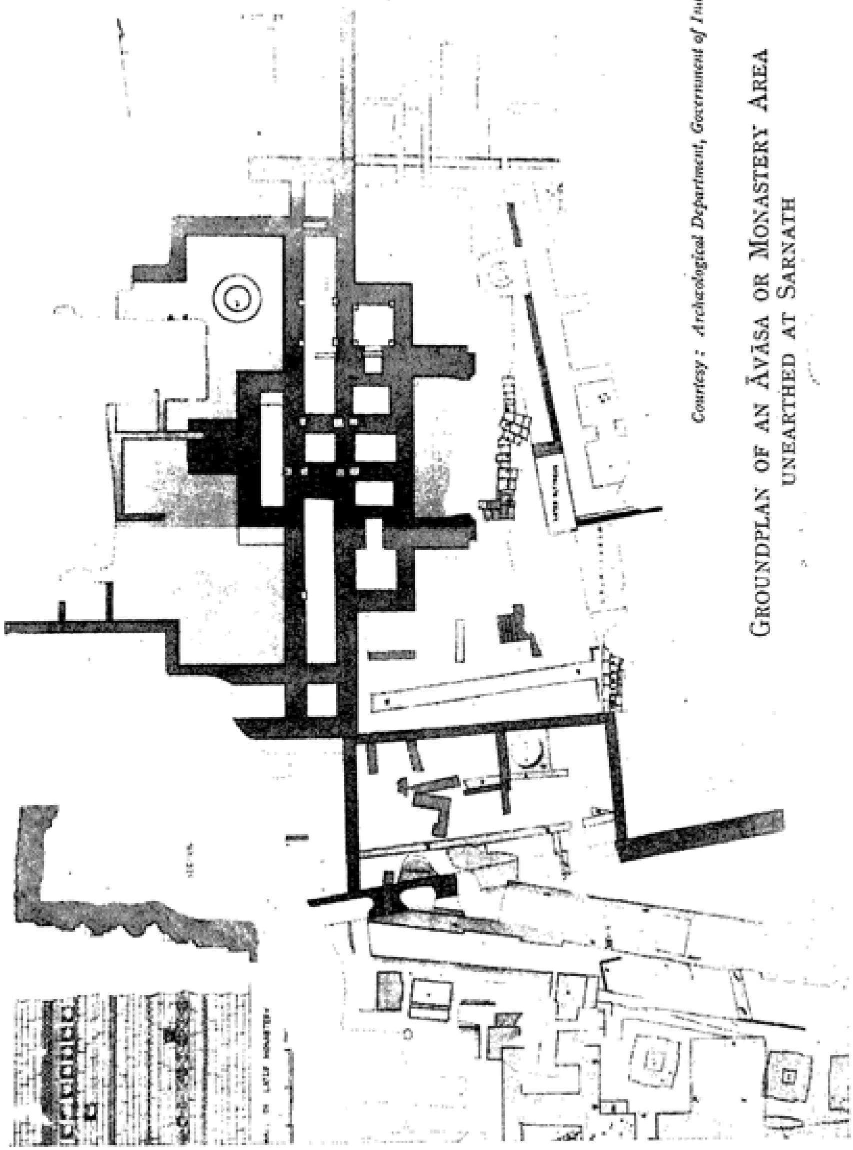
Yet the Lord breathed his last in the *sāla* grove of that 'wattle-and-daub town' set in the midst of jungles, while within sight the gentle stream of the Hiraññavatī flowed murmuring on, as though to carry the mournful tidings abroad. The Lord had started probably in mid-summer from Rājagaha, spent the *vassa*, the rainy season covering the three months of July, August and September at Beluva, and expired early in December of that year at Kusinārā, the length of the journey from his last halting stage at Beluva, near Vesāli, being well over 160 miles.

The year of death, so memorable, is, however, a matter of more or less speculative reconstruction in chronology. The calculations of scholars yield uncertain results. 'Not long

[17] MahaP, V, 4.
[18] EahaP, V, 41.

before and not long after 480 B.C.', says Oldenberg,[19] but, some year in the decade 487–477 B.C., according to the commonly accepted opinion,[20] which Dr. Thomas specifies as 483 B.C.[21]

[19] *Buddha*, p. 196.
[20] See discussion on the point in Keith's *Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 32.
[21] *Life*, p. XII (Chronology).



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

GROUNDPLAN OF AN ĀVĀSA OR MONASTERY AREA UNEARTHED AT SARNATH

PLATE X (i) Text page 80



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

PLATE X (ii) Text page 80



X (i) WITHIN THE REFECTORY

Left: Monks queuing up with receptacles to take doles
Right: Officers of kitchen seated, supervising the distribution

X (ii) NOVICES TAKING LESSONS

The Ācariya holds a sunshade and stands in front while giving lessons

(From defaced Mathura Sculpture probably as old as 1st century, B.C.)
Sketched

Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

PART II

BUDDHISM IN THE MAKING

V

THE 'WANDERERS' SETTLE

THE LEGACY which the Lord left to his time on his decease at Kusinārā was a two-fold one.

First, there was the *Dhamma-vinaya*, propounded by him, destined to grow in after ages into one of the world's major living religions. To define this *dhamma-vinaya* in terms of its later developments would be an unhistorical attempt, for we do not know, except from the sermons, discourses and sayings put into his mouth by legend-makers of two or three generations later, what the original shape and contents of the *dhamma-vinaya* were. It is clear, however, that the Lord, brushing aside ritualism, theology and metaphysics, shifted emphasis in religion once for all to man's inner life and that he had a system of thought as to the means by which this inner life could be purified and its powers cultivated so that it would be immune from all *Dukkha*, from all sorrows that the outer life,—the life of the flesh and the world,—inflict upon it. He united doctrine and ethics in a unitary system and hence the compound name, *Dhamma-Vinaya*.[1]

Secondly, he had founded the *Sangha* which was at that time just a sect in the wanderers' community, a small but influential sect who naturally became the custodians of the Lord's *Dhamma-vinaya* after his decease and in whose hands lay its initial developments. With the later history of this sect, the history of the religion is bound up so integrally that they cannot be studied or understood apart.

The *Sangha* and the *Dhamma-vinaya* developed together.

From the legends we know that, in the lifetime of the Lord, there existed in the wanderers' community, besides the sect founded by him, several others: mostly they represented shifting bodies of followers of individual teachers and founders

[1] For the import of the term and its developed *nuances*, see *infra*, pp. 92 ff.

of *dhamma*. They were more or less ephemeral: only two of these contemporary sects have left traces in later history, —the Ājīvaka and the Nigaṇṭha.

The Ājīvaka sect, founded by Makkali Gosāla, seems to have lasted for a few centuries,—the last mention of the Ājīvakas as a sect being found in a lithic record of the 2nd century, B.C.[2]; the Nigaṇṭha sect, however, founded by Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, has developed into Jainism, one of India's living religions, which at one time was a powerful rival of Buddhism in India.

None of these sectarian bodies, contemporary with the Buddhist sect, evolved on lines similar to the Buddhist; perhaps none made such rapid headway.

* * * * *

A Sect in the wanderers' community, as we have seen, used to be denoted by the name *Sangha* or *Gaṇa*, as in the phrase, *Sanghī-gaṇī-gaṇācariyo*, applied to the leader of a sect.[3] The Buddhists who called themselves Bhikkhu seem to have appropriated for their own body the former group-name, styling themselves *Bhikkhu-sangha*.

To outsiders, however, they were collectively known as 'Mendicants who follow him of the Sākya clan' (*Sākya-puttiya Samaṇas*). Where references to the Buddhist sect by outsiders occur in the legends, this is the term used, but the Lord himself designates it by a special descriptive name, the 'Bhikkhu-sangha of the Four Quarters' (*Cātuddisa Bhikkhu-sangha*).[4]

The exact import and implication of the phrase is somewhat obscure, but it is indicative of the growth of a sense of

[2] See B. M. Barua's monograph on the *Ājīvakas* (University of Calcutta, 1920); the Cave Dedications of Dasaratha in the Nāgārjuni Hills (Smith's *Asoka*, p. 201) where the Ājīvakas are mentioned as a sect.

[3] Of these two names for a sect among wandering ascetics, *sangha* has been appropriated by the Buddhists, though its use by the contemporary Nigaṇṭha Sect is found in the ancient canon of the Jains. In Jainist *Gaccha* and *Gaṇadhara*, the term *Gaṇa* survives (See Jain, p. 25 about Gaṇadharas). In some passages of the *Vinayapiṭaka*, *Gaṇa* is distinguished from *Sangha*, the latter applied to the Buddhists exclusively (e.g., 'Sanghena vā gaṇena vā puggalena vā'—Culla, VI, 15, 2.)

[4] Compare for instance Maha, I, 25, 2 where "the people (*Manussā*) say this that the *Sākyaputtiya Samaṇas* do such and such things" and Maha, VIII, 27, 5 and Culla, VI, 1, 4, where the lord gives some injunctions to the sect calling it *Cātuddisa Bhikkhu-sangha*. See also Culla, VI, 9, 11; Kuṭadaṇḍa Sutta, 24 (DN, i, p. 145), etc.

unity in the scattered body of the Lord's Bhikkhu followers, —a unity of ideal and purpose, though perhaps no union of corporate life and activity yet. The expression, 'Sangha of the Four Quarters,' became canonical; it is taken in donatory inscriptions of later ages to connote a conceptual and ideal confraternity.[5] The historical reality behind the conception, to which it harks back, is the primitive Sect of the Lord's own foundation.

United by the bond of common allegiance to a Teacher and his teachings, this primitive Buddhist sect, a unitary body, not divided yet, must have remained for a space of years in its original condition of homeless wandering until,—probably in half a century of the Lord's decease,—it evolved into an Order. The rapidity with which the Lord's *dhamma* propagated itself in the country and won adherents to the sect and acceptance among people is evidence of the extraordinary drive and vitality of the primitive Buddhist sect in its wandering and abodeless state.

The legends give an idea of the geographical boundaries of their wanderings and missionary activities. They were confined mainly to the East; it was taken as the 'holy land': "It is in the East", says an ancient proverb quoted in the canon, "that the Buddhas are born".[6] This area was expressed geographically by the vague general term, 'Eastern Tract' (*Puratthima*) or by the slightly more definite and concrete term, 'Middle Country' (*Majjhima-janapada*), including Magadha and Kośala, according to the partial knowledge of these primitive Buddhists of India's geography. It is possible, however, by pooling the topographical references in the legends to arrive at a clearer definition of this eastern region and even to place on the map of India the area that first came under the influence of Buddhism.[7] It would hardly be a hundred and fifty miles square in extent,—an extremely small slice of the entire Indian continent. Yet only a couple of centuries after, in Asoka's reign, Buddhism is found spread over the bulk of his far-flung empire which in extent

[5] Inscription at Dambulla Temple in Ceylon (Asoka's time)—*Ind. Ant.*, 1872, p. 139; Karle Cave Inscriptions—*Ep. Ind.*, and elsewhere.

[6] Culla, XII, 3—'Puratthimesu janapadesu Buddhā bhagavanto upajjanti'.

[7] Sec. HPI, Vol. II (Appendix A), and AMB, pp. 14-15.

was considerably larger than what the British empire in India ever attained to.

The questions which the wanderers used to ask on meeting one another for mutual recognition and acquaintance[8] imply that, in the formation of a sect in the wanderers' community, there were three constitutive principles, viz., (i) Headship or the existence of a recognized Teacher (*Satthā*), (ii) a distinct system of Faith (*Dhamma*), and (iii) Discipleship (*Uddesa*). The Buddhist sect must have originally had this common organisation.

But on the expiry of the Lord it lost one essential principle of its cohesion,—there was now no Head, no *Satthā*, under whom discipleship could be sought or to whom spiritual allegiance was due. The evolution of the sect thereafter took a special course, following a line which had been laid down by the Founder himself in his lifetime.

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On the question what became of the sect afterwards, an incident of the Buddha's last rain-retreat at Beluva, to which we have made a passing reference,[9] has a significant bearing. Ananda had earnestly prayed him " to say something touching on the *Sangha* ",[10] and both the context and the tenor of the reply leave no room for doubt that what Ananda had in mind was that the *Satthā*, before his decease, should either settle the succession to the headship or at least devise a constitution for the *Sangha*.

Obviously Ananda's idea of the *Sangha* was merely that of a sect as commonly understood in the wanderers' community. But the Lord's idea seems to have been different. By *Sangha*, the latter meant not a body of disciples, but a spiritual confraternity. " It does not occur to me ", says the Lord in reply to Ananda, " that I am the leader of the Bhikkhu-sangha or that it owes allegiance to me ".[11] He made this more explicit later by declaring in a brief exhortation, shortly before his

[8] See *supra*, pp. 34–35.
[9] See *supra*, p. 51.
[10] 'na tāva bhagavā parinibbāyissati na yāva bhagavā bhikkhusangham ārabbha kiñcid eva udāharatīti '—MahaP, II, 31.
[11] 'Tathāgatassa kho Ānanda na evaṁ hoti—Ahaṁ Bhikkhusanghaṁ pariharissāmiti vā mam ' uddesiko Bhikkhusangho ti vā'—MahaP, II, 32.

decease, that the bond of the *Sangha* must be *Dhamma-vinaya*, that is, community of faith and religious practice, not common allegiance to a person. It was evidently implied by his words that in the future polity of the *Sangha*, there must be no idea of individual leadership or personal guidance.[12]

This passage between the Buddha and Ananda at Beluva is prodigiously significant in the light of after-developments.

It records the belief, which got established among his followers, that, after the passing away of the Lord, there could be no personal head,—no *Satthā*, no leader or law-giver, or even an abbot. It is difficult to account for this transition of the Buddhist *Sangha* from "a monarchical type to a republican", as Oldenberg puts it,[13] except on the supposition of some sort of direction from a personal founder. In the kingdom of Magadha, where the Buddhist *Sangha* was formed, the normal idea of government was personal rule; among tribes and clans to the north and west of Magadha, it was of collective government, and the Lord himself was not a Magadhan, but a scion of one of these clans, brought up in its traditions till his twenty-ninth year.

Among the Vajjis, Mallas, Licchavis, Sākyas and other clans, the personal rule of a monarch was unfamiliar: in its place was Government 'in full and frequent assemblies'.[14] On which side the Lord's own sympathies lay is made clear beyond a possibility of doubt by the opening episode of the *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta*. Informed by Vassakāra, of the king's projected expedition against the Vajji confederacy, he turned towards Ananda, and the first question he asked of him was whether the Vajjis still continued 'to hold full and frequent assemblies'.[15] It was the main feature of their tribal self-government,—a distinctly republican feature,—and, when after Vassakāra's visit he had the Bhikkhus assembled wishing to speak to them on the 'conditions of social welfare' (*aparihāniyā dhammā*), it was this manner of republican self-government, the holding of 'full and frequent

[12] 'Na kho pan' etam Ānanda evam daṭṭhabbaṁ: Yo vo Ānanda mayā dhammo ca vinayo ca desito paññatto so vo mam' accayena satthā' *Ibid* VI, 1.

[13] *Buddha*, p. 337.

[14] See *Kṣtriya Tribes*, p. 90 ff. (*re* Licchavis); pp. 192 ff. (*re* Sākyas); *Hindu Polity*, Ch. VI.

[15] 'abhinnaṁ-sannipātā sannipāta-bahulā'—MahaP, I, 4.

assemblies', that he put first among the conditions.[16] Between the personal government in the kingdoms of the south and the collective government of the northern tribal republics, the Lord's mind had been made up. When later at Beluva, Ananda requested him to say what sort of rule the *Sangha* should have after him he seems to have reacted under his political predilections.[17]

In his reply on this occasion to Ananda, as well as in his utterances on all similar occasions when the question of leading the *Sangha* after his death had been mooted, the idea of personal headship had been definitely scouted by him. Devadatta had once proposed to the Buddha that, as he was grown old and near the end of his life, he should hand over the leadership of the *Sangha* to the former. It had evoked a sharp retort from the Lord that he would never think of handing over the leadership even to his most accomplished disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna, much less to an evil person like him.[18] The *Sangha* was to have no successor to the original *Satthā*, the founder. To Ananda at Beluva, he left the final injunction: "Be ye lamps (or islands?) unto yourselves (*atta-dīpā*). Be ye a refuge to yourself (*atta-saraṇā*). Hold fast to the Dhamma as your lamp (*dhamma-dīpā*). Hold fast to the Dhamma as your refuge (*Dhamma-saraṇā*). Look for no other refuge (*anaññasaraṇā* ".[19] In more definite terms, when he was nearing the end of his life, he reiterated the injunction: "It may be, Ananda, that in some of you the thought may arise, 'The word of the *Satthā* is ended, we have no teacher any more!' But it is not thus, Ananda, that you should regard it. The *Dhamma-vinaya*

[16] MahaP, I, 6.

[17] The *Sanghakamma* (See *infra*, p. 110) was the counterpart of the 'full and frequent assemblies' in tribal government.

[18] Culla, VII, 3, 1.

[19] MahaP, II, 33. The Pali word *Dīpa* in this passage is a little uncertain in meaning, being capable of being equiparated to Sanskrit *Dīpa* (Lamp) or *Dvīpa* (Island). Ancient Chinese translators and modern sinologists have rendered it as 'Lamp', but Buddhaghosa's comment on it is: "Mahāsamuddagatadīpaṁ viya attānaṁ patiṭṭhaṁ katvā" (establishing oneself as an island in an ocean). Buddhaghosa's interpretation as 'island' is borne out by the occurrence of the Sanskrit word *Dvīpa* (island) for Pali *Dīpa* in the passage in the ancient Sanskrit version of MahaP. (Vide Footnote 2 *supra*, p. 47 and Waldschmidt's Edition, p. 18. Also Bapat's review of Waldschmidt's work in *Annals* (Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, Poona), Vol. xxxv, 1955, p. 230.

which I have set forth and laid down for you all, let them, after I am gone, be the Teacher to you".[20]

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A legend purports to relate an occasion, "soon after the passing away of the Lord", when Ananda was loitering at dawn near the ramparts of Rājagaha, then under repairs.[21] The king's officers posted there, seeing and recognizing him, were curious to know how the Order, founded by the Buddha, was faring, now that the Lord was no more. They put to him several questions on the point. Vassakāra, a minister of the Court, asked whether Gotama had nominated a successor to himself. "No", replied Ananda. "Is there then a Bhikkhu chosen by the *Sangha* to fill the place?" asked Vassakāra. Being answered again in the negative, he expressed mild surprise how, in the absence of a leader, unity could be maintained in the Order. Ananda proceeded to explain the situation. The *Sangha* did not lack a refuge, said he:—it was the *Dhamma* laid down by the Lord in his lifetime; and, as for unity in the *Sangha*, they had an institution among them by which it was maintained. "Every sabbath all of us who live in the precincts of a village meet as a body, and in meeting enquire what each is doing. If, when this is being told, an offence or transgression by a Bhikkhu is disclosed, we make him act according to the *Dhamma* and scriptural ordinances. It is not by us, we hold, but by the *Dhamma* that he is constrained".[22] A sect was commonly understood as a body owing allegiance to a teacher. Such was not the case, Ananda further explained, with the Buddhist *sangha* after the Lord's decease, though the elders in the brotherhood still commanded reverence and worship by virtue of their spiritual attainments.

The periodical assembly mentioned by Ananda seems to have been the primitive bond of the Buddhist sect after the extinction of personal leadership on the Lord's decease. Its purpose is set out here to be a confessional service which implies the pre-existence of a set of 'Thou shalt nots'.

[20] MahaP, VI, 1.
[21] Gopaka-Moggallāna Sutta, MN.
[22] F—Dial, Vol. II, p. 160.

It is not known when exactly a disciplinary code ascribed traditionally to the Lord himself, of which the *Pātimokkha* was the final development, was first devised in the Buddhist community. An earlier stage, as we shall presently observe, may be traced at which the service of the assembly was a confession of *faith* only, not of *transgressions of monastic rules*. This custom of monks meeting locally in congregation became the foundation of the oldest extant institution of monastic Buddhism,—the *Uposatha*.

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The legend cited above (*Gopaka-Mogallāna Sutta, MN*); unhistorical though it may be in its narrative contents, points yet to the beginnings of an evolution within the *Sangha*,—the Sect emerging into an Order, the commencement of congregation. But the sect in gravitating towards a collective and congregational life was actually modifying the essential distinction of the parent body in which it had its origin,—the community of wanderers. A strictly limited restriction on 'wandering', however, had been recognised by the community itself even before the sect of the *Sākyaputtiya Samaṇas* was born within it.

Having 'gone forth from home into homelessness', a religious wanderer of whatever faith or denomination,—Sannyāsin, Yati, Bhikkhu or Samaṇa,—could not on principle seek home or permanent shelter again. Itinerancy was the essential and inalienable condition of his life. But its complete fulfilment was prevented by a climatic condition,—the monsoonal rains of India. There is a Vedic hymn which describes picturesquely the violence of these rains,—how they 'congregate in the sky and oppress the earth with the fury of torrents'.[23] The meteorological factor had to be reckoned with, and the whole wandering community used to suspend wandering and go into residence, until the skies cleared, rain-floods subsided, streams became fordable, tracks across countryside reappeared and the going was good again.

Generations of religious wanderers had been accustomed to seeking shelter and retreat during the season of monsoon

[23] Atharva-veda, IV, 153: 'Samīkṣayasva gāyato nabhāṁsyapāṁ vegāsaḥ pṛ'thagudvijantāṁ varṣasya sargā mahayantu bhūmim'.

rains,—long before Gotama had joined their community,—and in his own time the custom, automatically followed by generations, had acquired a certain sanctity and ceremonial character. It was confined to no particular sect of wanderers and was observed by the Brāhmaṇical Sannyāsins, the Yatis of the Nigaṇṭha sect, as well as by the Bhikkhus.

In the ancient texts which prescribe the rules and regulations of the Sannyāsins, we find it laid down that the Sannyāsin should be of fixed residence (*Dhruvaśīla*) during the rains[24]; for the Yati (the wanderer of the Nagaṇṭha sect), the same observance, called *Pajjusaṇa* is enjoined, and its venerable antiquity is insisted on[25]: for the Buddhist Bhikkhu, it was called *Vassa*. The Buddhist *Vassa* had two periods,—an earlier, commencing from the day after the full moon of *Āsālha* (the month covering the period from the middle of June to the middle of July) and a later, a month after that date,—the double period of *vassa* being probably of very ancient origin,[26] determined perhaps by the double monsoon of northern India. Thus from the wandering life of the Bhikkhus a period of three months in a year was set apart by immemorial custom. Where and how to spend this period was a matter which led to important developments in the *Sangha*.

The primitive principle of wandering and eremitical state of life was, however, never formally given up by the Buddhist. *It remained, but only in the form of an ideal. Practice departed, as we shall presently see, farther and farther from it.*

*   *   *   *   *

When the Buddhist wanderers had become cenobites, the inconsistency between the old ideal and cenobitical practice was one of the 'dilemmas' (*Ubhayakoṭika panha*) King Milinda (C.100 B.C.) is said to have propounded for solution

[24] *Āruṇeyopaniṣad*, 4—'The mendicant should stay from wandering and stay at one place, alone or two together'; *Gautama*, iii, 13; *Baudhāyana*, ii, 6, 11, 20—'To be of fixed residence during rains' (*Dhruvaśīlaḥ varṣāsu*).

[25] "As the venerable ascetic, Mahāvīra, commenced the Pajjusaṇ when a month and twenty nights of the rainy season had elapsed, so did the *gaṇadharas*; as the *gaṇadharas* have done, so their disciples have done. As they have done, so do the Nigaṇṭha Samaṇas of the present time"—Jacobi's *Jaina Sutras* (SBE), pt. i, p. 296.

[26] Maha, III, 2, 2 and Rhys Davids and Olderberg's note thereon in VT, pt. i, p. 300, footnote 1.

to his preceptor, Nāgasena.[27] The king quoted to him for reconcilement two obviously contradictory dicta of the Buddha. In the first the Lord had declared:

In friendship of the world anxiety is born,
In household life distraction's dust springs up;
The state set free from home and friendship's ties,
That and that only is the recluse's (*Muni*) aim.

While in the second:

Let therefore the wise man,
Regarding his own weal,
Have pleasant dwelling places (*Vihāras*—monasteries) built,
And lodge there learned man.

The dilemma really springs from the theory of *Buddha-vacana*, the ascription of all scriptural sayings to the Lord,—which bans the historical method of enquiry, aptly called by Pollock 'a key to unlock ancient riddles, a solvent of apparent contradictions, a touch-stone of sophistries'.[28] Milinda's first quotation is from the *Muni Sutta* in the *Sutta-nipāta*,—a work which conserves the ideas of primitive Buddhism[29]; the second verse was composed when these ideas had undergone considerable modification and become archaic in practice.

Of the unsocial, unsettled, eremitical life of a recluse, the Rhinoceros is taken as the type. It is an unherdable animal dwelling alone in the forest depths, and the 'Rhinoceros' *sutta* (*Khaggavisāṇa Sutta* in the *Sutta-nipāta*) is the ancient charter of a Bhikkhu's life. There is also an ancient commentary upon the *sutta* which enjoyed such prestige that the commentary was made part of the canon.[30] Its solemn refrain is—'Let him roam alone like a rhinoceros'.[31] A whole series of passages may be cited from the *Dhammapada*, the *Theragāthā* and other canonical works in which the 'rhinoceros' ideal is upheld. The Lord is represented as declaring to his followers: "So long as the Bhikkhus delight in forest-seats, they may be expected not to decline, but prosper"[32] and as giving the injunction, "Let not two of you go the

[27] Forty-first 'dilemma' in the *Milindapanho* (Milinda, p. 211).
[28] *Oxford Lectures and other Discourses* by Sir Frederick Pollock, p. 42.
[29] See Fausböll's Introduction to the translation of the *Sutta-nipāta* in SBE, Vol. X.
[30] In the *Culla-Niddesa* (ed. by Stede, PTS) of the KN.
[31] '*Eko care khaggavisāṇakappo*'.
[32] MahaP, I, 11.

same way ".[33] This was the primitive ideal of a Buddhist Bhikkhu.

The counterpart in practice of the 'rhinoceros' ideal is represented by the formula of the Four Resources (*Nissayas*) of a Bhikkhu.[34] They are (i) living on alms (*piṇḍiyālopa-bhojanaṁ*), (ii) clothing in cast-off rags (*paṁsukūla-cīvaraṁ*), (iii) dwelling at the foot of a tree (*rukkhamūla-senāsanaṁ*), and (iv) using (cow's) urine only as medicine (*pūtimutta-bhesajjaṁ*). Exceptions to these practices are allowable, but only as 'extra allowances' (*atireka-lābha*).[35]

The formula of the *Four Nissayas* still survives in (Hīnayāna) Buddhism. When a person has already been ordained as a Bhikkhu, as almsman professing to live for the rest of his life on alms, he is thus reminded in a formal exhortation of the other three *nissayas*, supposed to be the other resources of his mendicant life: "Robes made of pieces of rag are a requisite for a monk. So clad, it is good for you to strive as long as life shall last. The following exceptions are allowed: robes made of linen, of cotton, of silk, of wool, of hemp, or of these five materials together. Lodging at the foot of a tree is a requisite for a monk. So lodged, it is good for you to strive so long as life shall last. The following exceptions are allowed: monasteries, large halls, houses of more than one storey, houses surrounded by walls and caves of rock. Cow's urine as a medicine is a requisite for the monk. Thus provided it is good for you to strive as long as life shall last. The following exceptions are allowed: cow's butter, cream, rape oil, honey and sugar ".[36] It is apparent that the exceptions effectively cancel the rules out.

The picture in the *Vinayapiṭaka* of a Bhikkhu's normal life is that of a member of a well-settled and well-organized cenobite society.

In the developed *Vinayapiṭaka* picture, the *Nissayas* have no place at all. "Mendicancy was at first the rule. But the piety of lay devotees often alleviated the rigours of mendicant

[33] MahaP, I, 11.
[34] See D-PTS under *Nissaya*.
[35] Maha, I, 30, 4.
[36] JRAS (1875), p. 12 (Translation of the Pali text of Upasaṁpadā-Kammavācā by J. F. Dickson). This exhortation is in pursuance of the rule laid down in Maha, I, 30, 4—'I prescribe, O Bhikkhus, that he who confers the *upasaṁpadā* ordination, tell him the Four Resources'.

life. We hear of householders giving 'perpetual alms' to the *sangha* or making generous gift of robes or keeping up as at Vesāli a regular service of sweet food, or a high official at court, a follower of the Ājīvaka sect, providing the day's meal for the *sangha*. It was indeed suggested by Devadatta that accepting invitations was inconsistent with the principle of mendicancy. When monasteries came into existence, the resident monks would receive endowments from pious *upāsakas* (lay devotees) and sometimes Buddhist kings patronized monastic communities by remitting the revenues of a number of villages,—which was an established custom when Chinese pilgrims began to come to India. Thus mendicancy became optional, provision being otherwise made for the maintenance of the Bhikkhus. To be an avowed *paṁsukūla* (*sabbapaṁsukūla*, one who wears rags only), instead of being a point of merit, was held to constitute a *dukkata* (ecclesiastical offence). The rule about living at the foot of a tree was modified, if not completely negativated, by the habits of monastic life. Medicaments also were liberally allowed, and the whole sixth *khandhaka* (section) of the *Mahāvagga* is a treatise on them. Thus all the *nissayas* came to be virtually mere matters of taste and option: Devadatta got no credit for enjoining strictness with regard to some of them ".[37]

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With this modification of the old ideal of wandering, unsocial life, the arrangements for the rain-retreat of three months came to be made on the basis of communal living. The ideal itself, never given up, receded into the background. But even after the institution of regular monasteries, numerous Bhikkhus retained their eremitical habits, living in forests, feeding solely on alms, wearing cast-off rags, having never more than three pieces of cloth (*āraññakā-piṇḍapātikā-paṁsukūlikā tecīvarikā*).[38] Some Bhikkhus were known collectively as 'forest-dwelling' (*āraññaka*) Bhikkhus. Cenebitical habits grew slowly among the Buddhists, and the story is

[37] EBM, pp 116–117. The references to authorities are given *passim* in the footnotes in the book.

[38] Maha, VII, 1, 1; Culla XII, 1, 8 and elsewhere.

told of a monk named Dabbo, who had been appointed chamberlain (*senāsanagahāpaka*) at a monastic establishment, finding himself embarrassed and beset by Bhikkhus clamouring for lodgings at widely separated spots of Rājagaha,—some on the Vulture Peak, some on the Robbers' Cliff, some on the Black Rock on Isigili Pass, some in the Gotama Grotto, and so forth.[39]

The fiction was long kept up that the *raison d'etre* of monasteries and monastic establishments was only to provide shelter during the rains, and beyond that period the Bhikkhu must be homeless and on the move. Even in solving King Milinda's dilemma, Nāgasena has recourse to the same fiction: he justifies the building of monasteries on the ground that thereby the laity is benefited, having more facilities for approaching the monks,[40] but he holds that the life most proper for the Bhikkhus themselves is in the depths of the forest.[41]

With the staking out of colonies for rain-retreat called *Āvāsas*, the beginnings were made of cenobitical life among the Bhikkhus. Lodgings,—huts only for a single Bhikkhu or small group,—were scattered over the colony. Monasteries called *Vihāras* came later, and Mrs. Rhys Davids notes that the word "occurs only once in Vinaya narratives and there probably means a cave on the hill-side near Rājagaha".[42] Childers says that the word, *Vihāra*, "in the later times almost always was used to designate the whole of a building where many Bhikkhus resided; in older literature, the dwelling place, the private apartments of a single Bhikkhu".[43] When *Vihāra* came to mean a monastery, the private apartments of a Bhikkhu were called *Pariveṇa*.[44]

The persistence of eremitical habits, even within monastic life and society, is betrayed by the two types of *vihāras*—private and communal—distinguished in literary usage. The foundations of numerous Buddhist *vihāras* have been

[39] Culla, IV, 4, 4.

[40] Milinda, p. 212—'Vihāre vijjamāne sulabhadassanaṁ dassanakāmānāṁ anikete duddassanā bhavissanti.'

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 369 for a typical passage: 'Yathā mahārāja dīpiko araññe, etc.' Passages to the same effect will be found *passim* in *Milindapanho*.

[42] *Manual*, p. 238.

[43] See Childers under *Vihāra*.

[44] Maha, VI, 36, 4—'Vihārena vihāraṁ pariveṇena pariveṇam upasaṁkamitvā Bhikkhū pucchati'; Dp. p. 281—"mamo vihāro mama pariveṇam". Other examples are given in Childers under *Pariveṇam*.

unearthed all over India, and they bear visible evidence of the transition from the unsocial life of the solitary, the old ideal of the Bhikkhu, to developed cenobitism. "The oldest *vihāras*", says Fergusson, "consist of one cell only; little hermitages in fact for the residence of a single ascetic. In the next class they were extended to a long verandah with one cell behind it. As these had, however, several doors opening outwards, they probably were divided by partitions internally. In the third class, and by far the most numerous, the cell expands into a hall, generally with pillars in the centre; and around this the cells of the monks are arranged".[45] It took centuries more to evolve the fully developed congregational monastery built to accommodate the whole *sangha* resident at a place, called *Sanghārāma*, such as the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien, coming out to India in the early part of the fifth century A.D., saw at many centres of Buddhism.[46]

The *Vinayapiṭaka*, however, contemplates life of the Bhikkhus at the primitive *āvāsas*.

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Though an *āvāsa* was ostensibly staked out for the purpose of rain-retreat only, it became the unit of a communal life, —a particular company of Bhikkhus residing at an *āvāsa* acquiring domiciliary rights there. It was by right of residence at a common *āvāsa* that a company could perform together their collective transactions, *Sanghakammas*, and hold together the congregational service of the *Uposatha*. The validity of a *sanghakamma* or of a congregational service depended on common residence within the limits of an *āvāsa*.

The original *Sangha*,—the 'Sangha of the Four Quarters', —representing the first followers of the Lord in the wanderers' community, was a comparatively small, though expanding body. But with the staking out of *āvāsas*, the single undivided *Sangha* was split up into unitary bodies, each called a *sangha*. A *Bhikkhu-sangha* came thus to mean a definite and delimited community of Bhikkhus belonging to a particular *āvāsa*. It must have taken at least half a century's time after the Lord's decease, during which the Buddhists

[45] *The Rock-cut Temples of India* (1864), Intro., P. XV-XVI.
[46] Beal, p. XXXI.

had increased sufficiently in numerical strength and popular esteem, to bring about this development. It led to a distinction in thought between the *Sangha* (the ideal confraternity) and a *sangha* (a single community of monks). The original unitary *Sangha* of the Lord's followers in his lifetime, which had now vanished from real existence, became an abstract and ideal concept.

The two meanings of *Sangha*,—one denoting the real *sangha*, the resident community at an *āvāsa*, and the other the ideal brotherhood,—are brought out in several donatory inscriptions discovered in the ruins of ancient monasteries. The donor in such an inscription dedicates a cave or a hall or a monastery to the '*Sangha* of the Four Quarters' (*Cātuddisa Bhikkhu-sangha*), and at the same time makes an endowment of a definite sum of money or the revenue of a village, as when the donor is a royal personage, 'in the hand of the *sangha*'.[47] The peculiar wording of these donatory inscriptions has an explanation in the idealizing of the *Sangha*, which is well illustrated by the extreme view of a certain sect of Buddhists who held that the *Sangha* "could not accept gifts or purify them or enjoy, eat and drink or that gifts given to it bring any spiritual reward".[48] The donors, therefore, make the formal dedication to the ideal '*Sangha* of the Four Quarters', but the pecuniary endowment on the real *sangha* which is capable of accepting and enjoying gifts. In the Buddhist creed of the Three Refuges (*Ti-saraṇa*—Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha), it is in this ideal sense that *Sangha* stands.

The rules relating to an *āvāsa* and its regulation and government show how *sanghas*, the congregational units, grew up and were organized. Theoretically it was during the rain-retreat that a Bhikkhu could claim what is called 'bed and sitting accommodation' (*senāsana*) at an *āvāsa*. But from being a mere shelter during the rains, it became an organizational unit, to the discipline of which the Bhikkhu, spending the rain-retreat there, had to submit and in the exclusive

[47] e.g., *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. viii, No. 8, p. 90—The donor donates a cave to the Sangha of the Four Quarters and gives as a perpetual endowment 100 *kahapanas* in the hand of the sangha (data ca nena akhyanīvi Kahapanasata sanghasa hathe); Ep. Ind., Vol. VII, No. 20, P; 71 ff—The donor gives a nine-celled hall to the Sangha of the Four Quarters as the property (*Parigahe*) of the Mahāsanghikas.

[48] Kv., xvii, 6–8: P. of C., pp. 318–319.

corporate life of which he was to partake. The residents formed together one complete communion which was circumscribed by metes and bounds.

The rules for the staking out of an *āvāsa* lay down that its limits must coincide with natural boundaries, such as a mountain, a rock, a wood, a tree, a path, an ant-hill, a river or a piece of water, but they must not exceed three *yojanas* nor extend to the opposite side of a river unless there were facilities for crossing. Where no such boundaries existed, the boundaries of the village or the market-town would serve purpose. In a forest the community of residence would extend only to a distance of seven *abbhantaras* (a measure of distance). The boundaries of two *āvāsas* must not overlap and one must not encompass the other: an interstice must be left between them. Within the boundaries thus settled, the resident Bhikkhus would form a complete communion.

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The communion was expressed by the holding of a fortnightly congregational service by the entire body of resident monks. The service was in commemoration of two days in each month marked holy since pre-Buddhistic Vedic times.

Their holiness in the Vedic age had been associated with two sacrificial rites prescribed for householders, consisting in offerings to the *Paurṇamāsa* (Full Moon) and the *Darśa* (New Moon). The intending sacrificer had to observe the preceding days ceremonially by fasting or partial abstention from food, as well as by retirement at night into the house where the sacrificial fire was kept up. The gods were supposed, on these days, to come down and dwell with him, and they were, therefore, known as days 'when the gods dwell near' (*Upavasatha—upa* 'near' and *vas* 'dwell'). The *Upavasatha* observance was a well-settled institution of the Vedic age of India.

The practice of 'homelessness for the sake of religion' was of post-Vedic growth.[42] We may wonder whether those who had left home and embraced the wanderer's life were still haunted by the discarded Lars and Penates,—for, the

[42] I have given my reasons for this view in EBM, Ch. II (*The Primitive Parivrājakas—A Theory of their Origin*).

householders' custom of observing the fortnightly holy days is seen to linger among them, though its original purpose was non-existent in the condition of life of the religious wanderer who had to make a formal renunciation of all the Vedas.[50]

The custom in the wanderers' community had not, however, the ancient ritualistic content. The Sannyāsins, in the texts bearing on the regulation of their life, are enjoined only to assemble on these holy days for the rehearsal of sacred texts among which the *Āraṇyakas* and the *Upaniṣads* are specially mentioned.[51] They were texts suitable for the Brāhmaṇical Sannyāsins. Other non-Buddhist sects, we are informed in a legend, used to meet together on these days and hold public discourses on their respective *dhammas*.[52] When the Buddhists were only a sect in the wanderers' community, the observance of the ancient *Upavasatha* used to be carried out in the same fashion, by rehearsing their own *dhamma*.[53] The theme of their *dhamma*-rehearsal held in congregation seems to have had the name, *Pātimokkha*,—a term of uncertain meaning and connotation.[54] Traces of what the original *Pātimokkha* had been were completely obliterated by a later development of the theme into a confessional service with a code of monastic regulations as its text. But there is at least one legend which points to a more ancient and later obsolete form.

The famous *suttanta*, called *Mahāpadāna*, DN, gives an account of Gotama Buddha's six mythical predecessors, the first of whom was Vipassī, living untold æons before Gotama. By a curious telescoping of time, it is to Vipassī, the first Buddha, that the inauguration of the *Pātimokkha* recital is ascribed by the legend-maker. His Bhikkhu followers, we are told, used to re-assemble, after their missionary tours abroad, once in six years, to rehearse a *Pātimokkha* at the city of Bandhumati. This *Pātimokkha* consisted in the

[50] A preliminary ritual for one intending to be a sannyāsin is a sacrifice of (Oṁ) to fire or water, and 'Oṁ' is said to represent the three Vedas—*Jābāla*, 4 (see EBM, p. 63–64).

[51] *Āruṇeyopaniṣad*, 2: 'Sarveṣu vedeṣyāraṇyakamāvartayed upaniṣadamāvartayet'.

[52] Maha, II, 1—'sannipatitvā dhammaṁ bhāsanti'.

[53] This is suggested by the original form of the injunction to observe the Uposatha—'anujānāmi . . . Sannipatitvā dhammaṁ bhāsituṁ ti'—in *Ibid.*, 2, 11.

[54] See discussion on the etymology and import of *Pātimokkha* in EBM, pp. 88–90 and Winternitz, II, p. 22, footnote 2.

chanting together of a hymn concluding with the words: 'Such is the injunction of the Buddhas'.[55]

The verses of this hymn occur also with slight variations in the ancient hymnology, *Dhammapada*.[56] They define what may be called the cardinal Buddhist virtues. As described in the *Mahāpadāna*, the original Buddhist congregational service would seem to have been very closely akin to the *dhamma*-rehearsals of other sects in the wanderers' community. It represents the archaic practice among the Buddhists.

At some stage in the evolution of the Buddhist Order, the *dhamma*-rehearsal became specialised, impressed with a different form and character. The service which had been occasional was regularised and made a fortnightly one, falling on the days, traditionally held sacred as *Upavasatha* days, and, in place of extracts from holy texts, a code of ecclesiastical offences, re-edited for the purpose of a confessional service, was substituted.[57]

The substitution of a disciplinary code for a mere credo or a confession of faith is of much significance: *it evinces that the Sect has already become an Order*, recognizing now a common 'monastic discipline' (*Vinaya*) as its bond of union. The step could not have been taken before the wanderers had settled down to corporate *āvāsa* life.

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The original form and substance of the *Pātimokkha* text is as unknown as its authorship, as well as the circumstances of its introduction into the *Uposatha* service. We can only conjecture that it was originally in the form of a set of 'Thou shalt nots', but intended specifically for resident monks of the Buddhist Order. The *Pātimokkha* forms no part of the Pali canon, even though the bulk of the *Vinayapiṭaka* is based upon it; it is embedded, however, in the ancient commentary called *Suttavibhaṅga* on the canon. Through amendments and alterations in the course of oral transmission for centuries, the original *Pātimokkha* has become untraceable. We possess now only three complete *Pātimokkha* recensions

[55] 'etaṁ Buddhāna sāsanam'.
[56] Dp, vv. 184–186.
[57] Compare Mahapad, 28–29 (Dial, pt., ii, pp. 38–39) and **Maha II, 3, 1–3** (VT, i, pp. 241–243).

extant in Pali, Chinese and Tibetan respectively and an incomplete one in Sanskrit. Both in substance and in classification of offences, there is no absolute agreement among them.[58]

The legend, incredible for obvious reasons, was that the recital of the *Pātimokkha* had been enjoined by the Lord himself, to whom the thought occurred in a solitary hour: "What if I were to prescribe that the Bhikkhus recite as *Pātimokkha* the precepts I have promulgated to them? This will be their *Uposatha* service".[59] In accordance with the legend, the pre-existing code was re-edited, with a prefatory 'statement of occasion' (*nidāna*), adapting it to the form of a congregational service.

This is how *Pātimokkha*-recital is gone through:—A learned and competent Bhikkhu has to proclaim the occasion and introduce the recital thus: "To-day it is *Uposatha*, the fifteenth (of the half month). If the *sangha* is ready, let the *sangha* hold the *Uposatha* service and recite the *Pātimokkha*".[60]

The form in which the *Pātimokkha* was cast, as well as its object as described by Ananda in the *Gopaka-Moggallāna Sutta*,[61] leave no room for doubt that it had been conceived as an organ of monastic discipline: that it was intended that if a Bhikkhu had been guilty of any of the transgressions, described and named in the code, he should confess and atone. But it was prescribed later on that none but those who were *already* pure and guiltless of the listed offences was to be admitted to the service[62]: for one who had been guilty, a rite, called *Parisuddhi* (Purification), had to be gone through. The prescription of the purificatory rite marks a transformation in the character of the institution of the *Uposatha* by *Pātimokkha* recital. Its relation to *sangha* life is completely altered,—the disciplinary institution now becomes only a token of communion.[63]

As a token of communion, the *Uposatha* with the *Pātimokkha*-recital was held separately by each company of Bhikkhus

[58] See *EBM*, pp. 92–98 for irregularities in the contents of the *Pātimokkha*.
[59] VT, i. pp. 241–242 (Maha II, 3, 1).
[60] Maha, II, 3, 3.
[61] See *Supra*, p.
[62] Culla, IX, 2, 1; Culla, IX, 1, 1, where the Buddha refuses to recite the Pātimokkha, because the assembly is not pure.
[63] See EBM, Ch, IV (*The Pātimokkha as a Ritual*).

who had 'bed-and-seats' allotted at an *āvāsa* for the rainy season. It became just the outward symbol of their locally delimited religious fellowship. *All* the Bhikkhus at the *āvāsa* must join in it. If any of them for whatever reason could not join, he must either send a proxy to represent him or stay for the time being outside the *āvāsa* boundary.[64] Emphasis is laid on the *completeness* of the fraternity present at the service, the holding of which with an incomplete assembly would amount to an ecclesiastical offence.[65]

The unitary character of an *āvāsa* is emphasised not only by the *Uposatha*, but also in various other ways. If robes were donated by lay devotees at the boundary of an *āvāsa*, all residents were entitled to share in the distribution, though there seems to have existed some *āvāsas* which formed a group and took all profits equally, and when a gift of robe was made to one, it was shared by all in the group. At the periodical distribution of robes (*Kaṭhina*) again, common residence at an *āvāsa*, as well as the Bhikkhu's individual need, was laid down as a necessary pre-condition for the gift of a robe.

The *āvāsas* developed thus into regular monastic settlements, though the fiction that they were shelters for rain-retreat was studiously kept up. It is indicated by the rules relating to the allotment of 'bed-and-seats'. There were two regular occasions for it, viz., the commencement of the earlier and that of the later *vassa*. But a third occasion also is recognised, called *Antarā-muttaka* (translated as 'that which involves giving up for the intervening period').[66] This *Antarā-muttaka* allotment would be quite superfluous if the residence were really limited to the period of the rain-retreat. The modification among the Buddhist Bhikkhus of the rule of wandering must have necessitated this so-called 'interim allotment'; this allotment which is really made for the non-*vassa* period is said to be one "made in advance for the next *vassa*", which is absurd considering that for that period, another allotment is provided for.

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[64] The communion is conterminous with the *āvāsa* and each communion is to hold the Uposatha by itself—Maha, II, 6.

[65] Maha, II, 14, 2-3 which differentiates between a *Vagga Uposatha* and a *Samagga Uposatha* and holds the former to be unlawful.

[66] Culla, VI, 11, 4.

A body of monks settled at an *āvāsa* carried on the functions of their communal life in the republican mode which the Lord had admired in speaking of the Vajji tribe,—that is 'in full and frequent assemblies'. The transactions were called *Sanghakammas* (Acts by the *sangha*). There were different classes of *sanghakammas*, involving ecclesiastical acts, disciplinary measures, settlement of points of dispute concerning a doctrine or a monastic rule, the demarcation of boundaries, the determination of rights and privileges among the Bhikkhus themselves as well as against outsiders, etc. In every instance, an assembly of the congregation is called; a Resolution (*Ñatti*) is put; it is declared to the assembly (*Anussāvana*), and if the assembly does not signify by the token of silence its unanimous consent, a ballot (*salākā*) is taken and the majority opinion ascertained.

The right of participation in a *sanghakamma* is jealously guarded. Twenty-four disqualifications are listed which would disentitle a Bhikkhu to take part in it, the two (No. 21 and No. 22) most important being (i) living outside the boundary (*nānāsīmāya ṭhita*) and (ii) belonging to a different *āvāsa* (*nānāsaṁvāsaka*). The protest or vote of such a Bhikkhu, if he happens to be present in the assembly, is ineffectual. On the *Uposatha* day, a Bhikkhu is enjoined not go to an *āvāsa* (except under certain specified conditions) where there are Bhikkhus belonging to a communion different from his own.[67] A Bhikkhu who has committed an ecclesiastical offence and incurred the penalty of *Parivāsa* (i.e., having to live for a period separately from others) is not allowed to remove from his own *āvāsa* to another and the reason for it is obvious. But the rule is modified in the case of a change to a residence of Bhikkhus 'of the same communion' (*saṁvāsaka*).

The fact is implied in such disciplinary rules that a Bhikkhu, wherever for the time being he might choose to be, was recognized as member of a communion located at a particular *āvāsa*. It is interesting evidence that an *āvāsa* had become a domicile,—each a distinct centre of monastic life and culture and each a separate ecclesiastical district. A rule lays down that on the eve of the rain-retreat, no allotment of 'bed-and-seat' was to be made for a Bhikkhu residing outside the

[67] Maha, II, 35, 4.

boundary (*nissīme ṭhitassa*).[68] So the distinction sometimes drawn[69] between "residence within the common boundary" and "membership of the same communion" remained somewhat illusory, until the time when sects began to grow up among the Buddhists and the point acquired an adventitious importance.[70]

The *āvāsa* was a colony within settled boundaries, and inside these boundaries were separate lodgings to which the name, *Vihāra*, came afterwards to be given. They must have been mere huts and, when stone began to be used as building material, single one-roomed cells. A lay devotee might, as an act of piety, have some of the lodgings built at his expense: the first lodgings built for the Buddhist Bhikkhus, we are told in a legend, were sixty in number, erected in a day by a merchant (*seṭṭhi*) of Rājagaha in the lifetime of the Lord who thanked the benefactor for saving the Bhikkhus from inclemencies of weather.[71] If a benefactor did not come forward, a Bhikkhu had to obtain the building materials by begging, but the house had to be made by him according to certain measurements and with the approval of the *sangha*.

All the houses in an *āvāsa* were not residential. Some adjuncts were common, viz., a store-house, a refectory, a fire-room (i.e., a common kitchen), a ware-house, a privy, a common room, a promenade, a common bath as well as private bath-rooms, a pavilion, a well walled round and covered, etc. The right of property vested in the corporate body, the *sangha*, and not in any individual. Private proprietory right, even to a Bhikkhu's own lodging or the furniture therein, was not recognised.[72]

The furniture was of the simplest kind. The floor was spread at night with a cover (*bhummāṭṭharaṇa*) which was rolled up in the morning. There was a bedstead (*mañca*) with movable supporters (*mañca-paṭipādaka*) which were put away during daytime. The bed consisted of a mattress, a mat

[68] Culla, VI, 11, 3.
[69] As in Maha, IX, 4, 2.
[70] It was a moot point at the so-called Council of Vesāli (*āvāsakappa*): see *infra*, p. 105.
[71] Culla, VI, 1, 3–5.
[72] See Culla, XI, 1, 14—'These Sākyaputtiya Samaṇas make general use of everything in a conscientious way and take nothing as one man's peculiar property' (VT, iii, p. 384).

and a pillow. By the side of it stood a spittoon (*khelamallaka*). A board against which the Bhikkhu could recline (*apassāna-phalaka*) and a seat (*pīṭha*), probably resting on jointed legs, for 'turning down the seat' (*pīṭham nīcaṁ katvā*) is spoken of, completed the furniture. The alms-bowl, the clothes, the tooth-brush, and a few other necessary articles made up all the personal belongings of a Bhikkhu.[73] No manuscript or writing material is referred to,—for in that age literacy in our modern sense did not exist.

[73] See EBM, Ch. VII (*Communal Life at an Āvāsa*).

VI

THE CULT AND THE CANON

IN THE history of Indian religions it is a familiar phenomenon that a cult quickly forms round the person of the founder after his decease within the sect founded by him. Buddhism was no exception, and it took probably no more than two to three decades after the Lord's decease for a Buddha-cult to come into existence. It was the primitive cult of the Buddhists: it centred not so much in dogma or creed as in a subjective idealised concept of the Lord, his nature and personality.

The cult, a somewhat fluid one, was modified in course of time; it was interpenetrated by a growing spirit of docetism in the religion; it was finally superseded in Buddhist thought by the Mahāyānist developments of a later age. The only school of Buddhism which retains this primitive Buddha-cult is the ancient conservative Theravāda in its Pali canon. The cult shapes largely the Buddha-legends of which that canon is made up.

In these legends, however, the cult-concept of the Founder is not a simple or unitary one. Its composite character may be sensed through the variety of meaningful appellations given to the Lord in the legends,—*Bhagavā*, *Tathāgata*, *Buddha*, *Satthā* and *Jina*. Tradition, devotion and doctrine all enter into their *nuances*, and the great overarching notion in them is that the Lord's life illustrates perfectibility and his 'enlightenment' the climax and culmination of the practice of his *Dhamma*. The key to the Buddha-cult which, after the Lord's departure from the earth, was the bond of faith of the *Sākyaputtiya Samaṇas* as well as their sectarian distinction within the wanderers' community, lies in these canonical names.

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In the legends the plain family name, *Gotama*, for the Lord is put only in the mouths of those outside the rank of his

followers. To the devotee he is *Bhagavā* (literally, 'one endowed with great riches'),—an honorific appellation usually given in India even to-day by a disciple or devotee to his spiritual guide. Another name, *Satthā*, by which his followers call him has a more concrete content, but to them it has a significance, as we shall presently observe, deeper than a mere instructor or educator. The foundation of all efforts at the cultivation of one's inner life,—'removing barrenness of heart (*cetokhila*)', as it is put,—is held to be reliance (*saddhā*) on the Teacher (*Satthā*) himself, as well as on his system (*Dhamma*), his sect (*Sangha*) and his teachings (*Sikkhā*).[1]

Over against the purely descriptive content of these two names, *Bhagavā* and *Satthā*, a doctrinal element stands out in the pair of correlated names, *Tathāgata* and *Buddha*.

The first one is the name by which the Lord is not only called by others, but most frequently refers to himself. No explanation of the term is offered in the canon and there is no agreement among ancient commentators on the canon over its import.[2] Yet sometimes the context in which it is used throws unexpected light. The well-known *Brahmajāla Suttanta*, for example, contains a lengthy exposition (*veyyākaraṇa*) by the Lord of the doctrines held by contemporary rival sects. As against their dubious and speculative doctrines, is placed the *Dhamma* of the Tathāgata who, it is said, has set it forth, "*having experienced and realised it himself*".[3] This gives the essential note of the Tathāgata concept: the Lord 'gone or arrived there',[4] i.e., having reached and realised the culmination of his own *Dhamma*. The name, *Buddha*, is complementary to it. What remains vague and fluid in the term, *Tathāgata*, is crystallized, defined and brought to a point, identifying the culmination of the *Dhamma* with the supreme enlightenment,—the *Sambodhi* that the Lord himself attained under the legendary Bodhi Tree.

[1] Cetokhila Sutta, MN (F-Dial, Vol. I, pp. 71–74: SBE, XI, pp. 223–234).

[2] Dr. Malalasekera says: "The commentaries give eight (sometimes expanded to sixteen) explanations of the word, which shows that there was probably no fixed tradition on the point." DPP, Vol. I, p. 989.

[3] Brahmajāla Suttanta, DN. At the end of each recitative section, occurs the phrase—'Ye tathāgato sayam abhinnā sacchi-katvā pavadeti' (DN, I, p. 28 and *passim*).

[4] The compound word *Tathāgata* may be broken up as *Tathā* (there) + Gata (gone), or as *Tathā* (there) + *Āgata* (arrived).

The name, *Satthā*, has also a cultish *nuance* which is somewhat obscured by the title, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, given to the legends by western scholars, recalling their parallelism with Plato's *Dialogues*. The Greek work and the Pali scripture stand on wholly different footings, and what parallelism there is lies only in a certain similarity in the style and manner of discourse in both.

Plato's Socrates is plainly a Teacher functioning to educate the Athenians and the medium of his discourse is the living, ever-flowing 'dialectic'. The Teacher's views in the Greek *Dialogues* are kept deliberately in the background to neutralise the tendency of ideas towards formalism and fixity.[5] But, though the Socratic method may be there in many of the Lord's discourses, there is hardly the Socratic reticence or Socrates' lingering in the approaches to truth. The Lord's teachings are not the Socratic 'bringing out', not an 'education'; such an idea is not Buddhist at all: in Buddhist faith it is only the Buddha's special functioning,—the irradiation of his own personality and imparting thereby of his own enlightenment to mankind.

When the Lord is described as *Satthā* in the legends, it hits off an aspect of his personality,—the *Sammā-saṁbuddha*, as distinguished from the *Buddha* aspect,—and though his teaching function may be ultimately derived from the human tradition of him that remained in the inseparable background of the legends, the cult conceived this function to be the expression of his *Karuṇā* (compassion for mankind) attribute.[6]

A curious instance, however, of interpenetration of the legends by the human tradition is that, in spite of the cultish conception, the teachings are actually couched in a manner and style in which an individuality distinctly appears. It is so strong indeed that we have to refer it to a common source, for the many makers compiling these discourses could hardly have imparted the individual quality so distinctly and consistently.

The discourse in a legend is not always addressed to

[5] Lavell's *A Biography of the Greek People*, p. 211: "The dialogue, like the drama, puts the writer and his views into the background, so that the tendency of the written word to harden thought into fixity and formality is neutralized."

[6] For the *Sammā-saṁbuddha* doctrine, see *supra*, p. 4 and *infra*, p. 204.

acquiescent hearers. Opponents come forward, challenging the Lord with statements of their divergent views and doctrines, and he carries on discussion with them in a fashion eminently characteristic,—putting himself at first apparently in the place of the opponent, setting out from the same point of view, making use of the same expressions, and almost imperceptibly leading him over to the opposite standpoint.[7] The manner is ever the same,—refined, skilful, suave and polite. Almost as good an idea of the manner of the Lord's teaching may be gathered from these discourses as that of Socrates from the *Dialogues*, and one feels inclined to agree with the authority of Rhys Davids that behind it must have been the common traditional memory of an actual teacher and his method.[8]

But the *Satthā* character of the Lord is functional, not essential. It is only a dynamic expression of his personality. More essentially he is the *Bhagavā*, and from that concept stem those attributes which set him up as a *Mahāpurisa* in his followers' eyes: he bears on his person the marks of a Superman; he emits supernatural radiance from his body; he has foreknowledge of human events, and can with equal penetration see into the past and the future.[9]

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What rounds off his personality, however, giving it its final distinction, installing it in a unique category, is his Buddhahood. In the cult it is conceived as attained by him through victory over the imperfections of life (*āsavas*)'.

A primitive view of the religion, held by the Buddhists, was that it was a process and system of training in perfectibility, of which the culmination was a spiritual status technically termed *Arhatship*, exemplified by the personality of the Lord himself. One must rise to this status by the gradual conquest of what are called *Āsavas* (Imperfections).[10]

The *āsavas* are inherent in all forms of conscious life, earthly or celestial, and are set forth in groups of three and,

[7] Perhaps this is best illustrated by some legends in DN, e.g., *Kassapa-sīhanāda, Ambaṭṭha*, etc. See Dial, i, p. 207; Winternitz, Vol. II, pp. 69–70.

[8] Dial, i, p. 207.

[9] e.g., the *nidāna* of the Mahapad. See *infra*, pp. 187–188.

[10] References to passages on the extinction of the *āsavas* and Arhatship following as the result are given in D-PTS under *Āsava*.

in later doctrine, of four, viz., addiction to the senses (*kāmāsava*), lust for life (*bhavāsava*), speculative mentality (*diṭṭhāsava*) and ignorance (*avijjāsava*). For each group, a regimen is prescribed.[11] It is not clear, however, what the term, *āsava*, exactly meant to the Buddhist; it has been variously interpreted and translated[12]; its etymological meaning seems to be 'leak', something through which the quality of perfection dribbles to waste, and, by stoppage of the leaks, it is said, one 'rolls away all fetters and makes an end of *Dukkha*'.[13]

It is there, where 'all fetters are rolled away and *Dukkha* is at an end', that the Lord arrived,—he became the Tathāgata ('Arrived or Gone there') by virtue of his conquest of the *āsavas*. Thereby the Lord transcended life, passed out of all categories of being. Hence his alternative name is *Jina* (Conqueror).

The legend runs that, while returning from his seat under the Bodhi tree after enlightenment, the Lord was accosted on the wayside by a fellow-wanderer named Upaka. "You profess, then, friend", asked doubting Upaka, "to be the holy, the absolute *Jina*?" "Yes, friend;" declared the Lord in reply, "Like me are all *Jinas* who have reached the extinction of the *āsavas*. I have overcome all imperfections; therefore, Upaka, I am the *Jina*".[14]

Another legend relates how a Brāhmaṇa visitor put the question point-blank to him whether he was a God, a Gandharva, a Yakṣa or a man. He was none of these, replied the Lord, but a being essentially different by nature,—a Buddha, having conquered all the *āsavas*: "Those *āsavas*, through the non-abandonment of which I might have become a god, have been abandoned and cut off at the root, like a cut-off palm-tree, with complete cessation of becoming and without liability to arise in future; and likewise those *āsavas* through which I might have become a Gandharva or a Yakṣa or a man. Just

[11] Sabbāsava Sutta, MN, i, pp. 7 ff. In DS, Ch. IV, the *āsavas* are explained.

[12] The translators of Sabbāsava Sutta in SBE, Vol. XI, render the literal meaning of *āsava* as 'leak'. But Buddhaghosa, commenting on DS, Ch. IV, explains the word as 'intoxicant'. In F-Dial, i, it is rendered by 'canker'.

[13] See SBE, Vol. IX, p. 307.

[14] Maha, I, 6, 9—VT, i, p. 91.

as a blue, red or white lotus, born and growing in the water, rises and stays beyond it, unstained by the water, even so born and growing in the world, and having overcome the world, do I dwell unstained by the world. Remember, Brāhmaṇa, that I am a Buddha ".[15]

It is this *perfect* Buddha, risen superior to all imperfections of life and therefore no longer in the category of beings, earthly or celestial,—neither god nor man, nor Gandharva, nor Yakṣa,—but a unique personality whose only description can be that he is *Buddha*, the Enlightened,—that was the object of the primitive Buddha-cult. Lotus-like in quality, ' born and dwelling in the world, but unstained by the world ' —is the figurative summarisation of the outward aspect of his personality.

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With the dawn of this Buddha-concept on the devotee's mind, a felt disharmony arose between faith and tradition,—between what the Lord came to be in the eyes of the devotee and the lingering ' Gotama-Buddha ' tradition of the supremely holy man, the long-lived teacher and founder of a religion. The Man (*Purisa*) had then become the Superman (*Mahāpurisa*) in Buddhist faith.

So it is that the humanity of the Lord, known in all accounts of him in tradition, is consistently subdued in the legends to the colours of Buddhahood. It is the implicit, but prevailing tendency of the legends. The ancient commentator on the canon, Buddhaghosa, faithfully carries out this trend even in commenting on the most natural and human incidents occurring in the texts. Commenting for instance on the Lord's last ' elephant-look ' towards Vesāli, reported in the *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta*, he makes the obvious metaphor illustrative of a Buddha-characteristic, viz., fixed back-bones ' which compel one who is a Buddha to turn round like an elephant in looking back '.[16] It is the very *reductio ad absurdum* of the process.

The odd, almost comical, comment is typical of a mentality

[15] AN, ii, pp. 38–39. The translation is by Dr. Thomas in *Life*, p. 216, somewhat abridged.

[16] See SBE, Vol. XI, p. 64, footnote 1. But 'fixed neckbones' are not among the ' Lakkhaṇas '. See *supra*, pp. 52–53, for the ' Elephant-look '.

which leads all narrative in the legends to subserve the cult: the Buddha-doctrine comes first and then its concrete application to the Lord.

Sophistication of this kind may be illustrated by a few simple examples. Thus (i) one marked out as a Superman must have certain physiognomical characteristics, e.g., 'a protuberance on the head', 'a mole between eye-brows' and 'blue eyes',[17] and it is presumed that the Lord had them. Mrs. Rhys Davids believed that the Buddha actually had 'blue eyes', though it is not expressly set down in the legends[18]; (ii) one, who is destined for Buddhahood, must pass through actual experiences of human misery and sorrow, and they occur to the Lord as signs (*nimitte*) of his future Buddhahood[19]; (iii) one who aims at attainment of the supreme enlightenment must undertake the 'Noble Quest' (*ariya pariyesaṇa*) and so had the Lord done[20]; and, lastly, (iv) his death at Kusinārā was no common mortality, but the doctrinal 'Great Decease'.[21]

Evidently it is not from the lay man's angle, but a doctrinal standpoint, that the makers of the legends contemplate their Lord.

This attitude makes them strangely indifferent to the truth of biography, completely unhistorical in the treatment of tradition. If a doctrine has nothing in tradition to illustrate it, they would not scruple to imagine an incident of the Lord's life and set it down in illustration.[22] It is therefore in the light of the Buddha-cult that we must read and evaluate the legends of the canon.

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The contents of this canon are in different layers which, however, cannot be distinguished with much precision or

[17] Lakkhaṇa Sutta, DN. Nos. 29, 32, 31 (see Dial, iii, pp. 38–39).

[18] See Mrs. Rhys Davids's *Gotama the Man* (1928), p. 11.

[19] The word used is *Nimitta*, e.g., Buddhavaṁsa (PTS), p. 65. (XXVI–V. 16: 'Nimitte caturo disvā, etc.'). It means sign, omen, portent; prognostication (D-PTS).

[20] As in Ariya-pariyesaṇa Sutta, MN.

[21] 'Anupādisesayā nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāyati'—MahaP, IV, 57. That is, 'with no re-birth stratum left' (see D–PTS under *Parinibbāna*).

[22] A good example is the Bhaya-bherava Sutta, MN, obviously intended to encourage forest-dwelling Bhikkhus. There are several others which are based on obviously invented incidents of the Lord's life and career.

certainty. But a primitive stratum can be felt, overlaid though it is by later growths of doctrine, metaphysics and Buddhology. We touch it in several legends of the *Dīgha-nikāya*, some versified stories of the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, verses in the *Sutta-nipāta*, *gāthās* (poetical sayings) interspersed in the legends, and perhaps some of the sayings of the Buddha in the *Itivuttaka*. In this stratum, there is undoubtedly a good deal of pre-legendary material inextricably mixed up with later doctrinal and cultish concepts.

Even some popular *forms* of the pre-legendary tradition were perhaps inherited by the monk legend-makers.

The structure of the Pali canon is divided in a conventional list into nine parts (*navanga*).[23] The list, inserted in the canon itself, rests on an analysis of different forms of composition found in the canon. Buddhaghosa, the commentator, takes the names as classificatory labels for the contents of the canon. The labels are almost self-explanatory—(i) *Sutta* (a legend laying down a rule or a doctrine), (ii) *Geyya* (a sacred ballad or a tale in verse meant to be sung),[24] (iii) *Veyyākaraṇa* (an exposition), [25] (iv) *Gāthā* (a poetical saying),[26] *Udāna* (a hymn), (vi) *Itivuttaka* ('Thus said the Lord'), (vii) *Jātaka* (a story of previous birth), (viii) *Abbhutadhamma* (a marvel or miracle),[27] and (ix) *Vedalla* (probably catechism). These literary forms are generalized from a developed state of the canon. But some of these nine *aṅgas* seem to correspond to forms in which the Buddha-tradition may be presumed to have existed before the making of legends: such as *Geyya, Itivuttaka, Udāna, Gāthā* and *Jātaka*, harking back respectively to popular songs or ballads about the Lord, traditional recollections of the Lord's sayings, a hymn to the Lord or in his praise, scraps of the Lord's teachings, and popular stories about his pre-natal existences.

[23] MN, i, p. 133 and elsewhere.

[24] Winternitz, Vol. II, p. 59—"These poems can scarcely be anything but sacred ballads, counterparts of those *Akhyānas* with which the epic poetry of the Indians originated".

[25] The Brahmajāla Suttanta, DN, is called 'Veyyākaraṇa' in its concluding passage (DN, Vol. I, p. 46).

[26] Several Gāthās are quoted in the MahaP. They are archaic in both language and versification and are just inset matter in the legends.

[27] So the legend in MN (No. 123) which describes the miracles and marvels of the Lord's nativity and infancy is entitled the *Acchariy-abbhuta-dhamma Sutta*.

Neither from the cult nor from the legends that enshrine it can the background of popular tradition be dissociated. The legend-recital begins with 'So have I heard', and, in going backwards through the ages from reciter (*bhāṇaka*) to reciter, we arrive at a point of time when the lost oral tradition must have been near. The first makers of legends must have actually 'heard', not merely repeated, and their harking back must have been to what traditionary recollections remained of the Lord, passed away from the earth perhaps not more than half a century before.

The secret of that formula has lapsed since the invention of writing as a means to fix the memory. But the guarantee we seek in writing was sought in the days of yore in this solemn asseveration. It was a declaration of truthful reporting, and a story might possibly come down from sire to son, from son to grandson, and from grandson to a following generation under the guarantee of the formula—'So have I heard'.

In the peculiar atmosphere of monastic life, surcharged with the growing Buddha-cult, such traditional stories, however, would be apt to lose all their purely 'story interest'. The elements in them which were personal and incidental would sink to a second place; the cult would supervene, making of the stories, turned now into holy legends, concrete illustrations of doctrines and miracles true to faith, symbols and types of what the cult conceived as the true Buddha-personality.

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The making of legends in primitive Buddhism went on without the aid of writing, perhaps over four to five centuries. They accumulated,—and a time came when the need for conserving, arranging and systematizing them was felt. It was a process which absence of writing rendered delicately difficult. All sorts of aids to memory,—set words, fixed phrases and formularies, conventional descriptions in stereotyped terms, re-iterative passages categories (called *Mātikā*) and *memoria technica*,—are found brought into requisition in the composition of the legends. They have a sort of rhythmical or musical effect in the recital, seeming like

repetitions of *motifs* in a piece of musical composition,[28] but like dead-weight in the written text. The industry of systematization, exegesis and commentary also had to go on by word of mouth.

About the first writing down of the canon in India, there is no reported tradition as there is about it in Ceylon.[29] The 'three baskets' (*Tipiṭaka*) of the Theravāda school must have been made up long before their texts were put into writing. In the *Milindapanho*, we are told about the method by which the learned Nāgasena, instructor of King Milinda (Menander—*circa* 140–110 B.C.), himself acquired his learning. He became the pupil of Dhammarakkhita of the Asokārāma monastery at Pāṭaliputra. There, from the mouth of his teacher, 'he learnt by heart the whole of the Three Baskets of "the Buddha's Word" in three months and after a single recital 'so far as the words were concerned' (an almost incredible feat of memory when we consider the voluminousness of the collection), 'and in three months more he mastered the spirit (i.e., their meaning)'.[30]

The transference of the canon from 'word of mouth' to written text, is marked however, by a legend of the *Divyāvadāna*, in which a casual reference is made to the *reading* of the 'Word of the Buddha' (*Buddha-vacāna*). The ladies of a house are said to peruse, after the day's household labours are over, the *Buddha-vacana* by lamp-light and take notes therefrom, for which *bhūrja* (birch-bark) leaves, ink and pen, as well as oil (for the lamp) and cotton (for the wick) are required.[31] We shall not be far wrong in placing this legend in the 1st century, B.C.

The tradition of canon-writing in Ceylon, however, is definite and is set down in the ancient chronicles of the island. It is recorded that in the reign of Vaṭṭa Gāmaṇi (1st century B.C.) the canon, both text and commentary, was reduced to writing, and the event is thus commemorated in verse:

[28] See on this point, Winternitz, II, p. 68.

[29] Except the obviously incredible statement in verse, 325, of *Mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa* (circa A.D. 800) that 'the sayings of the Teacher were written down at length' in the reign of Udayin, grandson of Bimbisāra, king of Magadha, contemporary with the Buddha. See Imp. Hist., p. 10 and Text, p. 24 (*Tadetat pravacanaṁ Śāstrurlekhāpayisyati*).

[30] QM, Vol. I, p. 28.

[31] See Div., p. 532: 'Rātrau pradīpena Buddhavacanaṁ paṭhanti; tatra bhurjena prayojanaṁ tailena masinākalamayā tulena'.

> The text of the Three Piṭakas and the commentary thereon,
> The wise Bhikkhus of former times had handed down by word of mouth;
> The Bhikkhus of that time (i.e., the Ceylonese Bhikkhus in the reign of Vaṭṭa Gāmaṇi), perceiving how all beings decay and meeting together, wrote them down in books that the Dhamma might last long.[32]

Texts which lie in word of mouth are difficult to settle; the only means of doing it would be to divide them into convenient sections and charge a group of learned Bhikkhus at an *āvāsa* with the custody of each section. Each group would then memorize and also specialize in its own section, not as mere reciters (*bhāṇakas*), but as professors, expositors, commentators,—in short as custodians of both the texts and their true meaning. The existence of such specialists in the *āvāsas* is occasionally referred to in the legends,—*Dhamma-kathikas* ('expositors of doctrine') *Vinayadharas* ('repositaries of monastic rules and regulations') and *Suttantikas* ('specialists in the Longer Discourses').[33]

This sort of specialization, however, both implies and presupposes classification and arrangement of the existing mass of legendary materials according to the nature of their contents. The process seems to have started with a division between *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*.

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Dhamma-vinaya is one of the set compounds in the Lord's discourses. The exact scope or content or the original significance of any of the two parts of this compound,—that is, the connotation it had in the Lord's own mouth,—is not known. What the *Dhamma* propounded originally by the Founder was,—whether distilled in abstract categories as laid down in the sermon of 'Turning the Wheel of Dhamma', or traceable in other and more fluid parts of the reported discourses,—is guess-work and speculation. The *Vinaya*, again, in the Lord's original discourses, could not have had the limited significance, to which it is confined in the canon as 'discipline of monastic life',—for the discourses were admittedly not exclusive to the sect and the audience addressed

[32] Dpv, 20–21 and Tur, p. 132 (end of Ch. XXXI).
[33] See *infra*, p. 116.

was almost always a mixed one of householders and *Sākya-puttiya Samaṇas*.

The *Dhamma-vinaya* passed, on the Lord's decease, into the custody of the latter,—the sect of wanderers that developed later into the cenobite order of monks in the *āvāsas*. The monks had the shaping of the *Dhamma-vinaya* in their hands. It emerged from their hands with a distinct monkish character impressed upon it, and at least one school of Buddhism, the Theravāda, has perpetuated this character in its own canon.

Thus the *Dhamma*, after the Lord, becomes the monk's *dhamma*. The rule is introduced into the *Pātimokkha* that no detailed exposition of the *dhamma* must be given to one unordained—the breach of the rule being treated as an ecclesiastical offence.[34] The householders, called generally *Gahapatis*, and *vis-à-vis* the monastic community, *Upāsakas* (worshippers), are carefully kept outside the system. The outsiders had of course no right of entry to the congregational *Uposatha* assembly which was a purely monastic institution, but they were allowed to spend the holy day in the monastery in the company of monks. But the injunction was that the *dhamma* was not to be expounded to them,—only general ethical principles and rules of right conduct.

Did this principle of separation in respect of the *Dhamma-vinaya* between monkhood and laity stem out of the Lord's teachings ?

Curiously enough, in the legends themselves there is a recurrent strain directed against such exclusiveness which is called *Ācariya-muṭṭhi*, 'the teacher's closed fist', the holding back of something by a teacher. In the *Dhamma* of the Tathāgata, it is said, there must be no such 'close-fistedness',[35] and no esotericism or secrecy, for the character of the *Dhamma* is to shine only in the open. "Three things", declares the Lord, "shine openly and not secretly: the disc of the moon, the disc of the sun and the *Dhamma-vinaya* proclaimed by the Buddha".[36] Yet what was meant by the

[34] Pācittiya 4: 'Yo pano bhikkhu anupasampannaṁ padaso dhammaṁ vāceyya pācittiyam'. The commentary, however, interprets the rule as directed against a wrong method of teaching the *dhamma* to a Sramaṇera (see VT, i, p. 32).

[35] 'Na tatth' Ānanda Tathāgatassa dhammesu ācariya-muṭṭhi'—MahaP, II, 32 and elsewhere.

[36] AN, iii, 129 (*Tika-nipāta*).

Founder for mankind came to be appropriated by a sect. We shall see later how reaction set in against it within the sect itself, leading to the first Great Schism (*Mahābheda*) of the Mahāsanghikas.[37]

Likewise was the *Vinaya* 'monasticized' after the bifurcation of *Dhamma-vinaya*. It was put into such a shape and system as to be available only to the ordained.

Among the Lord's precepts, several relate to the conduct of a Bhikkhu's life: they stand in the form of general instructions. But, in the movement among the *Sākyaputtiya* sect after the Lord's decease to systematise his teachings, these instructions were set apart and codified. The violation of any of them was made an 'offence'. So a code of 'ecclesiastical offences' was made up and it was given the name *Pātimokkha*.

This code was taken as the basis of Vinaya.[38]

It is interesting to observe how what is general and more or less fluid elsewhere in the canon is cast in the form of enactments in the *Pātimokkha*.

Thus in the *Vinayapiṭaka* itself, there is a legend in which the Lord lays down 'Four Things not to be done' (*Cattāri Akaraṇīyāni*) by a Bhikkhu.[39] These are enacted and classified in the *Pātimokkha* in a category of 'Offences involving defeat in religious life' (*Pārājikā Dhammā*). Two legends elsewhere in the canon contain instructions given by the Lord as to how disputes among Bhikkhus should be dealt with.[40] In the *Pātimokkha* they are recast as rules of 'Procedure for the settlement of Disputes' (*Adhikaraṇa-samatha*) and they are expounded at length in the *Vinayapiṭaka*. In a legend in the *Sutta-nipāta*, some broad and general principles for the conduct of a Bhikkhu's life are given in outline,[41] but they are found worked out in the *Vinayapiṭaka* into a complete system of monastic discipline.

What the canon understands by *Vinaya* is actually the monk's *vinaya*, the monastic *regula*.

[37] See *infra*, pp. 133, 144.
[38] See *supra*, pp. 66, 109.
[39] Maha, I, 78.
[40] Kinti Sutta (No. 103) and Sāmagāma Sutta (No. 104) in MN (F-Dial, Vol. II, pp. 136–144).
[41] Dhammika Sutta in the *Sutta-nipāta*.

Thus were monkhood and laity differentiated in the matter of *dhamma-vinaya* at an early stage of development of Buddhism, and the fiction grew up later that the Lord had one set of ethical principles and rules of conduct for the monks and another for lay men.[42]

[42] The traditional idea, which is certainly unhistorical, was that the Lord had devised one set of rules of right conduct for the laity and another set for the monks. The Chinese pilgrim, I-tsing, in his work on Vinaya as practised in India in his time (latter half of the 7th century), entitled ' The Buddhist Religion as practised in India ', puts the same idea in the following words : " When he (the Lord) preached to the lay followers, he expressed himself in a concise form and taught the five prohibitive precepts(*Pañcasīla*) only. But in instructing the priests exclusively, he fully explained the purport of the seven groups of offences (i.e. the *Pātimokkha* and the Vinaya rules based on it) "—*Takakasu*, pp. 4–5. It assumes that the Monastic Order, its elaborate organisation and developed polity were actually in existence in the Lord's lifetime. As a matter of fact, the Sect became an Order only after the Buddha's decease (see *supra*, p. 66.).

VII

THE SEARCH FOR AUTHORITY

"What *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* have been promulgated and proclaimed by me, let that be after my death your *Satthā* "[1]—is said to have been the Lord's final injunction to Ananda. The authenticity of it must rest on the sole credit of the legend. But, whether the Lord actually left this injunction or not, it is record of the belief held by the first leaders and organizers of the sect that such in effect was the Lord's last spoken will and testament. The authority that had vested in him in his lifetime devolved now on the *Dhamma-vinaya*.

But to fix that authority,—to make the *Dhamma-vinaya* definitive,—was by no means an easy procedure in a community that held fast to an impregnable anti-authoritarian tradition. The *Dhamma-vinaya* existed only in the collective memory of monks and lay men. The primitive makers of the Buddha-legends had to rummage in it and piece together the Lord's teachings surviving dispersedly in oral tradition. They gave them fixity and form by including their substance, with a setting of time and occasion, in a discourse or dialogue. A legend, the result of this literary effort, is called a *Sutta*, 'threading together': it is linked to the tradition of a living Lord discharging, as the cult held, his function of the 'enlightened teacher'.[2]

With the efflux of time, however, during which the making of legends passed out of the hands of those who were in touch with an actual tradition, that link must have been steadily weakening: the recollection itself became purely traditionary, transmitted by a line of reciters (*bhāṇakas*). A time must have come when the guarantee of the reciter's formula, 'So-have-I-heard', could no longer pass muster or silence challenge.

[1] See *supra* p. 63, fn. 12: 'Yo vo Ānanda mayā dhammo ca vinayo ca desito paññāto so vo mam' accayena satthā' (MahaP, VI, 1).
[2] See *supra*, pp. 4, 203.

In the *āvāsas* of Buddhist monks the spirit that prevailed was not that of mediæval Christian monasteries. The Buddhists lived under the rule and tradition—'Be ye refuge unto yourselves'. In a *sangha*, there was no place for an abbot[3]; spiritual allegiance to a person had come to an end with the death of the *Satthā*; and the spirit of questioning, disputing, testing rules and doctrines in the light of individual reason and conscience was alert and unchecked. The legends themselves sometimes reflect this contentious spirit.[4] Typical of monastic Christianity is the well-known story of the learned monk Lanfranc of England reading the first 'e' in the Latin word, 'Docere', short at the bidding of his illiterate superior[5] Intellectual submission of this kind, far from being accounted a monastic virtue, would probably incur sharp derision and contempt in a Buddhist *sangha*.

Therefore the legends in which the Lord's *Dhamma-vinaya* was being cast and moulded had real and imperative need for seeking some stamp of authority.—Was it in fact the saying of the Lord that the legend conveyed? Had the Lord actually laid down the rule? Was the doctrine verily so?—there was no authority of an abbot or a superior to silence such sceptic queries.

Against this psychological background, the practical need must have been felt by the monks, not long after they had settled in the *āvāsas*, of defining and stabilising the *dhamma-vinaya* by a canon. The discipline of monastic life could be organized only on the basis of a recognized and accepted system of doctrine and practice. It became necessary, therefore, to make out of the legends accumulating in the monk community a collection that would be definitive, and this attempt at a canonical collection of legends proceeded side by side with the organization of *āvāsa* life.

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It is possible to distinguish an earlier and a later stage in the monkish efforts at canon-making, and they are bound up intimately with the history of development of monastic life itself. At first it was a search for authentic rules and doctrines

[3] See EMB, pp. 132–145.
[4] e.g., Sāmagāma Sutta, MN, F-Dial, ii, p. 140 ff
[5] Maitland's *Dark Ages*, p. 178.

in the body of legends; later, the effort at settlement of their texts. But finality, as we shall see, was never reached in the process.

In the *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta* (IV, 7–11), four tests for the authenticity of a rule or a doctrine are laid down, and they are called the Four Great Authorities (*Mahāpadesa*). When these tests were invented, monastic life and organization seems to have been at a very early stage of development: the idea of separate and independent corporations of Bhikkhus, —of *sanghas* which were self-contained and self-governing,— had not evolved yet. With the growth, however, of *sangha* life and organization at several independent centres, the Four Great Authorities became wholly obsolete and were retained only by tradition in the canon.

Their inapplicability in the conditions of developed monastic life is obvious. The 'Authorities' are as follows:

(i) *I have heard it direct from the Bhagavā.* (But such a declaration was impossible to make some years after the decease of the Lord who himself was an octogenarian when he died.)

(ii) *It has been promulgated by a sangha containing elderly and leading men at an āvāsa.* (But in another *āvāsa*, a rule or a doctrine so promulgated might have a little recommendatory value, but no binding force or authority.)

(iii) *It has been promulgated by a number of elderly and learned Bhikkhus, versed in canonical lore, at an āvāsa.* (But the authority of such a doctrine or rule accepted in other *āvāsas* would be even weaker than No. ii, and, unless it accorded with a Bhikkhu's own reasoning and interpretation or appealed to his sense of right, he had complete freedom to reject it.)

(iv) *It has been promulgated by a learned professor of the canon at an āvāsa.* (But this only lent some weight to the doctrine or rule in question, but imparted no authority).

There is internal evidence in the *Suttanta* itself of a curious time-lag in the incorporation of these 'Authorities' in the

canon. That they were regarded as effete and obsolete is clear from the way in which they are made subject to the principle of 'libre examen'. In enumerating them, the caution is added to each 'Authority' that, before acceptance, it should be checked by reference to the *Sutta* and the *Vinaya*, implying settled texts thereof.[6] It had evidently been felt that the *Mahāpadesa* way of making a canon would be a blind alley in the conditions of developed monastic life and community. But at the stage of mere search for the Lord's authentic teachings, which the *Mahāpadesas* represent, the recovery of genuine rules and doctrines out of oral tradition was an object more important than the textual criterion of their genuineness.

The 'Authorities' contemplate a situation in which the life of the Bhikkhus, though decentralized and represented by a number of *sanghas* living apart, has not yet developed to the stage when each of them was a distinct and independent centre of culture. The acceptance of a rule or doctrine by the learned monks of one *āvāsa* could hardly be argued at that stage of development in favour of its acceptance by another. The text of it had to be judged, and for that purpose a standard of reference was required.

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The possibility of the settlement of *texts* lay in the existence of specialists in the *sangha* who were custodians of different sections of the *Dhamma-vinaya*. The obvious way of arriving at agreed texts would be to pool together the recollections of the 'specialists',—of the *Vinayadharas*, the *Dhammakathikas* and the *Suttantikas*. It could be done by joint recital.

The recitation of sacred texts had indeed been an ancient practice of the Bhikkhus: it is illustrated by the story of the young monk Soṇa, who, at the Lord's bidding, is said to have recited in the congregation from memory the whole of the *Aṭṭhaka-vagga*,[7] the text of which is extant in the *Sutta-nipāta*. Such *solo* recitations seem to have developed into 'choric singing' at a later stage,—into a sort of liturgical

[6] 'sutte otāretabbāni vinaye sandassetabbāni' (literally, 'to be brought down to the *Sutta* and shown in the *Vinaya*').

[7] Maha, V, 13, 9.

chanting (*Saṅgīti*) by the entire congregation, the object being to fix the texts in collective memory.

One *saṅgīti*, with a spot of historical background so rare in the legends, is described. Report is received that the founder of the Nigaṇṭha Sect is dead and that disputes and dissensions over his teachings have broken out among his followers. The Buddhist monks become anxious for the solidarity of their own body.

Sāriputta thus addresses the brethren: "The Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, friends, has just died. Since his death the Nigaṇṭhas have become divided and have fallen into opposite parties. Disputes have broken out and they go on wounding each other with 'weapons of words'; —— so badly has their *dhamma-vinaya* been set forth . . . But to us, friends, the *Dhamma* has been well set forth by the Lord . . . Herein (in this assembly) there should be a chanting of it by all in concord, *not a wrangling*, that thus this holy life may persist and be long maintained".[8] So, led by Sāriputta, the whole congregation holds what is called a *Saṅgīti-pariyāya*, a round of congregational chantings.

In the Pali canon is recorded an interesting tradition in the form of two appendices to the *Vinayapiṭaka* section (*Cullavagga, Khandhakas* XI and XII) to the effect that the canon received in this way, by united congregational recital, a stamp of authoritative definiteness and the texts recited were therefore the only definitive canon of Buddhism. Two famous occasions on which, not portions or excerpts merely, but the whole of its *Dhamma-vinaya* contents was rehearsed in the *saṅgīti* form, first, at Rājagaha shortly after the Lord's decease, and, secondly, at Vesāli a century later, are described in two elaborate legends.

The canonical tradition so recorded has been seized upon by scholars, in their attempts to trace the early history of Buddhism, as a genuine bit of Buddhist 'church history', and the assemblies of monks, where the rehearsals were supposed to have been held and collectively ratified, have been variously called, in terms of the history of Christianity, 'Councils', 'Synods', etc.

[8] Saṅgīti Suttanta, DN: Dial, iii, pp. 203–204.

The historical element in the tradition calls for more careful scrutiny. The tradition is recorded in the canon in such haphazard fashion, lends itself to such different versions, both early and late, contradicting each other in essential particulars,[9] and appears so self-discrepant at the same time that its apocryphal character is patent. There can be no 'church history' in it at all. It would seem rather that some previous tradition was garbled by the monks belonging to one particular school, viz., Theravāda, with the object of making the canon, composed out of the legends and adopted by the school, appear definitive.

The two occasions are described at full length,—preliminary incidents, proceedings and sequelæ. The proceedings are in the form of a *Sanghakamma*, joint transaction by a body of monks. But, curiously enough, although the transactions are supposed to have settled the canon *in its entirety*, the agenda, as recorded, of the proceedings in both cases, are matters relating solely to *Vinaya*, and each occasion is called *Vinaya-saṅgīti* (Chanting of Vinaya), in the concluding reference.[10] Historical evaluation of these two supposed events of early Buddhist history is possible only when we view them in the proper setting, — of the Buddhist monastic community and its institutional forms and practices.

In this natural setting, the so-called 'First Council' shows itself to be nothing more than a *general conference of monks* where business, such as the canonical legend records, could not possibly have been transacted, and the 'Second Council' as only an occasion for the '*Settlement of a Dispute*', a *Vivādādhikaraṇa*, among a local body of monks. Neither could possibly have had the effect, claimed for it, of imparting any stamp and seal of authenticity or finality to the canon.

In the history of Buddhism in fact there has never existed any *one* authoritative collection of legends, universally accepted, but there were different canons of different schools.

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[9] See HBT, pp. 27–33.

[10] It is doubtful whether 'Vinaya-saṅgīti' was a universally accepted name. In a passage of the *Milindapanho*, the first occasion is referred to as 'Dhamma-saṅgīti': 'Bhāsitam p' etaṁ dhammasaṅgītikārakehi therehi'—Milinda, p. 175.

The so-called 'First Council' is linked on by the maker of the legend to an inset story in the *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta*, on the comparatively close correspondence of the narrative of which to actual tradition we have already commented.[11] The story itself might well be only a chance gleaning out of traditional tales of the Lord's decease and after-happenings,—a petty gossipy incident with no bearing on the main theme and leading to no consequences. But its very oddity and extraordinariness would keep it alive.

The story is that in the universal mourning for the Lord just departed, Subhadda, an aged disciple, struck a discordant note by light-heartedly remarking: "Enough, sirs, weep not, neither lament! We are well rid of the great Samaṇa. We used to be annoyed by being told, 'This beseems you, this beseems you not'. But now we shall be able to do whatever we like; and what we do not like, that we shall not have to do". This incident, seemingly so trivial, is taken as the motive and occasion for summoning by the venerable Mahā-Kassapa an assembly of five hundred elders at Rājagaha for a complete rehearsal of the *Dhamma-vinaya* lest there should remain any confusion as to what the Lord had permitted and what not.

Whatever the *historicity* of the Subhadda incident, its *plausibility* would undoubtedly strike one who needed a background for inventing a legend on the "Settlement of the Canon and its Authenticity." The account of the first 'council' is only a legend of this invented character, seizing, as a peg to hang on, the Subhadda story in the *Mahāparinibbāna* narrative.

The legend happens also to be framed in such a way as to lead to a curious self-contradiction: the canon is said to be settled, but it is accepted only by the party that assembled at Rājagaha with the avowed object of settling it, but is not accepted by others. In other words, no real settlement of the canon is achieved.

After the introductory story of Subhadda, the legend relates that the five hundred elders, summoned by Mahā-Kassapa, settled down for the rain-retreat in the city, and it is added by the way that the elders were anxious that other

[11] See *supra*, p. 46.

Bhikkhus might not move up there during that season.[12] The reason for the anxiety is plain; the incoming Bhikkhus, outside the selected body, might choose to abstain from the projected *sanghakamma* which had been designed to be the rehearsal of the *Dhamma-vinaya*, and thereby render it invalid on the ground of incompleteness (*vaggatā*). The *sanghakamma* of this 'assembly of five hundred' is then described as having been carried through according to the approved rules of a *sanghakamma*, and the *Dhamma* discourses, as classified in the extant canon into the 'five *nikāyas* (sections)' accepted by the token of silence after rehearsal by the *sangha*. But the silence of unanimous agreement was not long to be broken, as we shall presently observe.

The admission is plain here that this *sanghakamma* (i.e., the Rehearsal) was gone through by a single body of elderly Bhikkhus, and all the authority that it could claim was that of the third *Mahāpadesa*. That the authority was not accepted on all hands appears from the sequel as reported in the legend itself. We are naïvely told that after this *sanghakamma* had been put through, Purāṇa with a number of followers came up to Rājagaha and was met by the elderly Bhikkhus. What passed between the two parties is thus described:

> When he (Purāṇa) was seated, the Thera Bhikkhus said to him: "The Dhamma and the Vinaya, friend Purāṇa, have been chanted over by the Thera Bhikkhus. Do thou then submit thyself to and learn the texts, so rehearsed by them."
>
> "The Dhamma and the Vinaya, sirs," replied Purāṇa, "have been well sung by the Theras. Nevertheless, even in such manner as it has been heard by me and received by me from the mouth of the Blessed One, in that manner will I bear it in memory."[13]

The initial anxiety of the Theras that other Bhikkhus might not come up to Rājagaha during their rain-retreat in that city thus becomes perfectly intelligible. Purāṇa invokes the authority of the first *Mahāpadesa* against the third, and

[12] "Then it occurred to the Thera Bhikkhus: 'In what place shall we chant over together the Dhamma and the Vinaya?' And it occurred to the Thera Bhikkhus: 'In Rājagaha is alms plentiful. and there is abundance of lodging places. What now, if we were to spend the rainy season at Rājagaha, and chant the Dhamma and the Vinaya together and if no other Bhikkhus were to go up to Rājagaha during the rainy season?"—VT, iii, p. 372—Culla, XI, 1.

[13] VT, iii, p. 381—Culla, XI, 1, 11.

the refusal to accept the Theras' canon, however polite, goes definitely against the assumption that the canon was really settled.

Besides, the whole account is vitiated by anachronism. The assembly is said to have been held shortly after the Lord's decease. If so, two impossible assumptions underlie the report of the proceedings,—first, that so soon after the Lord's decease the Buddhists had reached that stage of monastic development where the idea of 'separate *sanghas*', the rules of validity of *sanghakammas*, their procedural forms like *Ñatti* (Resolution) and *Anussāvana* (Proclamation), etc., had already evolved; and secondly, that the legends had already been classified into five *nikāyas*, of which at least the fifth *nikāya*, called *Khuddaka-nikāya*, could not possibly have been made up, as some of the texts it includes set forth ideas and doctrines which belong undoubtedly to a much later and developed stratum of Buddhism.[14]

If there was any actual tradition behind this legend, it could only be that shortly after the passing away of the Lord at Kusinārā, the prominent leaders among the Sect of *Sākya-puttiya Samaṇas* had held a conference among themselves at Rājagaha. Beyond this, all that is said of 'canon-making' seems unreliable. Legends of the Lord had no doubt grown up; the classification of them into those bearing on the *Dhamma* and those on the *Vinaya* might also have been made; but no Canon could have emerged out of them,—not until two or three centuries had elapsed after the Lord's decease.

* * * * *

The Second Council, called the 'assembly of seven hundred' at Vesāli is said to have been occasioned by a more protracted and a much more disputatious affair, in which two parties of monks are represented as vigorously engaged in a trial of strength over certain rules of *Vinaya*. Each party tries to win adherents, and the ten moot-points that emerge are referred at last to a *Ubbāhikā* (Committee) under the rule of

[14] "This collection was probably only concluded at a later period" (Winternitz, p. 77), and: "There is no doubt that the works combined in this collection orginated at very different periods and were not originally intended to form parts of one collection" (*Ibid.*, p. 78). See also *infra* about the poetical works like *Vimānavattha* and *Apadāna* which show a late development in the faith (p. 202).

procedure in cases of dispute (*vivādādikaraṇa*) where the issues get obscured by 'pointless talk and obscure arguments'.[15]

Of the ten points, No. 4 (*āvāsa-kappa*, referring to the rule in Maha, II, 8, 3) and No. 5 (*anumati-kappa*), touch on the validity of a *sanghakamma* :—'that a number of Bhikkhus residing within the same boundary of an *āvāsa* might hold the *Uposatha* separately' (No. 4) and 'that a *sangha* not at unity within itself might carry out an official act undertaking to inform the Bhikkhus of it' (No. 5). These questions, as we have pointed out,[16] could arise only when sects within Buddhism began to appear; they relate really to the rights of residence of a schismatic party.

The *Ubbāhikā* is said in the legend to have given its verdict in favour of one of the contending parties. But it is significant that the points, over which it exercised its jurisdiction, are of no central importance in the *Vinaya*, and it is difficult to see how the occasion could be utilized for or be instrumental in *confirming the whole canon*. The legend itself comes to a lame and impotent conclusion ;—it does not actually state that the *Dhamma-Vinaya* was rehearsed, but only that the 'ten points' were refuted publicly: "So the venerable Revata questioned the venerable Sabbakāmi on the ten points in the midst of the *sangha* also, and as he was questioned on one after the other, the venerable Sabbakāmi gave reply. Now, whereas at this rehearsal of the *Vinaya*, seven hundred Bhikkhus took part, therefore it is the rehearsal of the *Vinaya* called 'That of the seven hundred".[17] But we are left wondering at what stage of the proceedings this 'rehearsal' had been given,—no rehearsal being mentioned in the report itself of the proceedings.

Read between the lines, this legend is really the report of an ancient monkish dispute, a *Vivādāhikaraṇa*, in the exact form described in Culla, IV, 14. It is just possible that it represented an actual episode in Buddhist history, and, because of the wide and energetic canvassing carried on by the parties concerned and the eminent position of the judges who gave the verdict on the *vivāda* (dispute), it created some

[15] Culla, IV, 14, 19.
[16] See *supra*, pp. 77–78; also *infra*, pp. 125–126.
[17] Culla, XII, 2, 8–9 (VT, iii, p. 414).

temporary sensation in the entire Buddhist community of the time. Perhaps there was a lingering tradition about it at the time when the legend was composed. The decision in the dispute having gone in favour of the party among whom attempts at shaping the canon were in process, its significance and importance were magnified: it was seized upon to bolster up the idea of the authenticity of the canon they were making.

The *Dīpavaṁsa* refers to this second 'assembly of seven hundred', but adds a sequel to the effect that, instead of the canon being settled, the decision gave rise to a schism. There are other traditions about this assembly which place it much later in date and substitute 'five points of doctrine' for the 'ten points of Vinaya'.[18]

* * * * *

From the two legends on 'canon-making', presented so confusedly in the Theravāda canon, a nucleus of fact, however, can be separated, namely, that there was an early attempt in Buddhism, made by the Theras, to evolve a definitive canon of Buddhism,—one which should be the sole authoritative repository of genuine rules and doctrines, the wheat separated from the chaff. The attempt was in the approved form of a *Sanghakamma*. It failed,—but the followers of the Theravāda ultimately,—perhaps in two or three centuries after the first false start,—completed their canon.

Only, in stead of a canon of Buddhism, it became the canon of a School. Other schools had their own canons,—some perhaps had no canon at all, but only a set of select texts out of the existing legends.

The real cause of the Theras' failure to compile, so to speak, a 'Bible of Buddhism', an authoritative standard of reference for the doctrines and rules of the religion, was latent in the religion itself. Buddhism repudiated Authority in religion in any conceivable form.

If there be any truth in the picture of the Lord, which the legends of the Pali canon assemble for us, an undoubted feature of it is that the founder of Buddhism is categorically against the claim of Authority in matters of religious faith and practice. In his reported dialogues and discourses, he

[18] See *infra*, p. 130.

insists, whenever the matter crops up, on individual realisation and conviction as the sole and sufficient criterion of 'rightness' for every individual. He sets up *Attan* ('*Ātman*' —Self) against all other current standards of judgment.

It is with him an absolute and universal standard,—not for the instructed and enlightened alone, but for one and all, the wise and the ignorant alike. Speaking to the Kālāmas (who were of a different sect), he asks them, after expounding his own doctrine, not to accept it—' because it is well-reported, or has the sanction of tradition, or was so held in the past, or is given from the scripture, or seems logical or methodological, or for the sake of tolerance or suitability, or because it is propounded by a Samaṇa', but only after they have realised its merits by themselves.[19]

'*Attanā jāneyyātha*' ('If you understand yourselves')—he says to the *Kālāmas*, and this emphasis on the primacy of 'self-knowledge' rises to a penetrating note, an impassioned exhortation, when he speaks to his followers, as to Ananda at Beluva soon before his death. And to remove from the minds of his followers the last proneness to acceptance of authority, he disowns his own position as the leader or guide of the Bhikkhus and tells them that there must be no leader or guide for them after his decease.[20]

Brāhmaṇism on the other hand stresses the authority of tradition and of scripture. Saṅkara states the Brāhmaṇical position :

> In matters to be known from scripture, mere reasoning is not to be relied on . . . As the thoughts of men are altogether unfettered, reasoning which disregards holy texts and rests on individual opinion only, has no proper foundation. Thus we observe that men of the most undoubted intellectual eminence, such as Kapila, Kanāda and other founders of philosophical schools have contradicted one another.[22]

[19] 'Iti kho Kālāmā, yaṁ taṁ avocumhaettha tumhe Kālāmā mā *anussavena* mā *paramparāya* mā *itikirāyā* vā mā *piṭakasampādānena* mā takkahetu mā nayahetu ākāra-parivitakkena mā diṭṭhinijjhānakkhantiyā mā bhavyarūpatāya mā samaṇo no garūti, *yadā tumhe Kālāmā attanā vā jāneyyātha*—ime dhammā, kusalā ime dhammā anavajjā ime dhammā viññuppasatthā ime dhammā samattā samādinnā hitāya sukhāya saṁvattantiti atha tumhe Kālāmā upasampajja vihareyyāthā ti iti yaṁ taṁ vuttam idam etam paṭicca vuttam '.—AN, iii, 653.

[20] See *supra*, p. 64.

[22] See Vedānta Sūtras, II, 1, 11 (*Vedānta Sūtras with Sankara's Comment* by Thibaut, SBE, Vol. XXXIV, part i, pp. 314–315). About the date and life of Saṅkara, see Radhakrishnan's *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, pp. 447 ff.

A counterblast to it is the Lord's message to the Kālāmas.

Buddhism does not belong to the prime of Indian civilisation: it came when that civilization was already carrying the burden of a legacy of caste, custom, tradition and system of rules and institutions. His call to people to discard this burden rings down the long corridor of time, strangely evocative of what Matthew Arnold calls the 'modern spirit':

> "Modern times find themselves with an immense system of institutions, established facts, accredited dogmas, customs, rules, which have come to them from times not modern. In this system their life has to be carried forward; but they have a sense that this system is not of their own creation, that it by no means corresponds exactly to the wants of their actual life, that for them it is customary, not rational. The awakening of this sense, is the awakening of the modern spirit."[23]

[23] Matthew Arnold's *Essays on Criticism* (on Heine).

VIII

MONASTIC LIFE: ORGANISATION, CULTURE AND STATUS

As *āvāsas* grew up and multiplied during the first two centuries of Buddhism and settled life in monasteries became the rule, the Bhikkhus came to be distinguished from the general body of wanderers.[1]

The *Pātimokkha* had been the Bhikkhu's disciplinary code in the unsocial pre-*āvāsa* condition of life. 'Controlled by the restraints imposed by the *Pātimokkha*' (*Pātimokkha-samvāra-samvūto*) is an epithet of frequent occurrence in the canon to describe a good Bhikkhu.[2] The transition from solitary wandering to communal living, however, called for something different,—for a system of discipline and organisation able to regulate not only the personal life of a Bhikkhu, but also the collective *āvāsa* life in which his personal life was now involved.

The *Pātimokkha*, outgrowing its practical usefulness, was retained as a liturgy only for the *Uposatha* observance, while the *Vinaya* was developed for practical purposes.

Whatever significance *Vinaya* may have had in the Lord's own mouth, it was taken, as we have seen,[3] to mean the Bhikkhu's way of life,—monastic *regula*. In that sense was the *Vinaya* developed,—the process must have taken over a couple of centuries,—by the monks in order to meet the new conditions of cenobitical life.

The development of the *Vinaya* was in two directions. The object at the initial stage was to make each *āvāsa* a unit

[1] 'They are not Bhikkhus, but Paribbājakas' (Nayyo ete bhikkhū paribbājakā 'ti)—Culla, V. 23, 2. Also compare Pācittiya, 41 (in *Pātimokkha*), which must have been of late introduction in the development of the Code—'A Bhikkhu who with his own hand delivers food or drink to a naked ascetic or a Paribbājaka is guilty of a Pācittiya offence'. (Yo pana bhikkhu acelakassa vā paribbājakāya vā sahatthā khādanīyaṁ vā bhojanīyaṁ vā dadeyya, Pācittiyaṁ).

[2] See EBM, p. 91.

[3] *Supra*, p. 94.

of congregation within fixed boundaries, holding unitedly the fortnightly service of the *Uposatha* and performing all transactions pertaining to the community life by joint acts called *Sanghakamma*. Rules and regulations were framed to secure this object.[4] At a later stage the object was to develop through *sanghakammas* a system of corporate life and self-government for the whole resident *sangha* of an *āvāsa*.

This twofold development of the *Vinaya* was the work and achievement not of one, but of several generations of monks, starting from the original *Pātimokkha* rules. When it was complete, it constituted for the monks a body of 'conventional laws',—a charter, as it were, of monastic self-government, which, as we shall find, was backed by State-recognition.

The *Vinaya*, thus developed into a system, was incorporated by different sects of Buddhism in their respective scriptural canons. The traditional division of a Buddhist canon is in three parts,—*Sutta*, *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma*,—although it is not possible to assert that this tripartite division was universal, as only a few fragments of the many canonical recensions made by different Buddhist sects survive. Each sect must have shaped in its canon the *Dhamma* and the *Vinaya* according to its approved ideology.

The most complete body of monastic laws, however, is to be found in the *Vinayapiṭaka* of the Theravāda Pali canon.

The laws are not cast in the form of a code, but have the usual legendary frame with a few rare exceptions, each law standing in the encasing of a Buddha-legend. They are substantive as well as procedural, regulating both the Bhikkhu's individual conduct and the collective *sangha* life,—the main functional organ of the latter being the *Sanghakamma*. The laws in fact so enlarge the scope and operation of *sanghakammas* that they constitute altogether a complete and sufficient system of self-government for monks.

To this system of monastic self-government the nearest parallel would be the 'direct democracy' of an ancient Greek city-state, taking the *āvāsa* for its analogue.

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Thus there was no single person or body of persons in a

[4] See *supra*, p. 94.

sangha vested with competence or authority to make a binding rule, give a judicial decision or institute an administrative measure. Every act was a collective one,—an act by the *sangha* in its corporate capacity. Every qualified member had an indefeasible right to participate in it; under the rules of procedure, the putting through of a *sanghakamma* in abrogation of this right would render it null and void.[5]

But a time came when a principle of representation had to be recognised without violation of the democratic principle.

So long as the *sanghas* were small, it was possible to assemble the whole *sangha* for a *sanghakamma*. But it was hardly a practical proposition in later times when the number of residents increased and grew unwieldy. A select group out of the *sangha* was taken to represent the entire body. In this representative sense, the group called itself a *Sangha*, as is said in the rule: "There are five kinds of *Sanghas*,—the Sangha of 4, the Sangha of 5, the Sangha of 10, the Sangha of 20, and, lastly, the Sangha of more than 20".[6] A *sangha* of twenty and upwards was competent to perform all acts: but for *sanghas* of less number, restrictions on their competency and jurisdiction were imposed.

These representative *sanghas* were not committees, but quorums, and the distinction can be illustrated by taking a few hypothetical cases. The boundaries, for example, of an *āvāsa* have got to be settled. Three Bhikkhus are present. They may not transact business until another Bhikkhu turns up and helps to form the quorum, for in such a *sanghakamma* a minimum of four is required. Suppose again there are seven Bhikkhus present. They may transact the business, viz., settling the *āvāsa* boundaries, only if *all* of them join in it: it will not be competent for four of them to proceed to the *sanghakamma* apart from the remaining three, that is, by a committee.

A committee is recognized only when confusion arises in the *sangha*,—when 'pointless speeches are brought forth and the sense of any single utterance is not clear',[7] as is supposed to have happened at the so-called 'Council' of Vesāli.

[5] See EBM, pp. 146–147.
[6] Maha, IX, 4. 1.
[7] Culla, IV, 14. 19.

The necessity for a *sanghakamma* might arise (i) by a general requisition, or (ii) through a dispute. Business of a more or less routine character would arise by requisition. When the sense of the whole *Sangha* was understood to be in favour of a particular measure, it was brought formally before an assembly and carried through in the regular form. When, on the other hand, the sense of the *sangha* was divided, it became a case of dispute. It is obvious that all disciplinary *sanghakammas* belonged to this class, for in them the rest of the Bhikkhus acted against a single Bhikkhu or a group of Bhikkhus.

The procedure was special and elaborate for each form of action[8] in *sanghakammas* of this category: the procedural rules governing them were called *Adhikaraṇa-samathas*.

The importance of these procedural rules is justly emphasised, as on them depended in a large measure the success or failure of *āvāsa* self-government.

As the *sanghakamma* was the main organ of *sangha* life and self-government, it was hedged in with strict rules of formalism and constitutionalism. The forms had to be observed meticulously and the validity and invalidity of an act sharply distinguished.[9] An ordinary *sanghakamma* had two stages. First, Resolution (*Ñatti*) and Proclamation (*Anussāvana*). The matter for decision by the *sangha* was defined by a Bhikkhu in the form of a Resolution placed before an assembly of monks thus: "Let this (the matter defined) be done", which was followed by a proclamation of it, once or thrice according to the nature or gravity of the *sanghakamma*. The second stage was decision by the *sangha*. In a *sanghakamma*, however, which dealt with a dispute or an offence against the code of monastic discipline, the procedural technicalities of the *Adhikaraṇa-samathas*[10] were brought into requisition, one of which was ballot (*salākā*)-taking to ascertain majority opinion.[11]

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[8] A summary will be found in EBM, pp. 156 ff.

[9] See Maha, IX.

[10] They are given in a list of seven in the last section of the *Pātimokkha*.

[11] Ballot-voting was the main feature of the mode of procedure called *Yebhuyyasikā*. See EBM, pp. 159–161.

The Disputes (called *Adhikaraṇa*), for each of which a *sanghakamma*, in the special form of procedure applicable to it, was necessary for settlement, cover a wide range: they illustrate at the same time the scope and the effectiveness of *āvāsa* self-government. They are put in four categories:

(i) *Vivādāhikaraṇa*—Dispute on certain specified matters which may be summarised as (*a*) points of doctrine (*Dhamma*), (*b*) rules of discipline (*Vinaya*), (*c*) the 'teachings, practices or ordainments' of the Tathāgata, and (*d*) the nature of an ecclesiastical offence. Disputes on these matters would tend to give rise to schisms.

(ii) *Anuvādādhikaraṇa*—Dispute regarding the state of a Bhikkhu's opinion, morals, character, conduct or manner of life.

(iii) *Āpattādhikaraṇa*—Dispute regarding specified kinds of offences alleged against a Bhikkhu. This would lead to the adoption of disciplinary proceedings against the Bhikkhu, and if he were found guilty after the procedure of trial prescribed for the offence, the due penalty would be imposed. The penalties were of various kinds, mostly curtailment of the Bhikkhu's rights as a member of the *sangha* and extending to expulsion. They are laid down in a classified category in the *Pātimokkha* code and are explained and elaborated in the *Vinaya*. It will be observed that the scope of (ii) was more comprehensive and one found guilty under it would merit no lesser penalty than expulsion.

(iv) *Kiccādhikaraṇa*—Dispute regarding the procedure of a *sanghakamma* or the duties and obligations of the *sangha*.

The following examples may be taken in illustration:

No. (i)—At an *āvāsa* at Vesāli, some Bhikkhus invite lay men to offer money to the *sangha*: Yasa says that it is against the *Dhamma*;—this is *Vivādādhikaraṇa* which must be formally brought before the *sangha*. (See account of the 'Council' of Vesāli in Culla, XII, I.)

No. (ii)—At an *āvāsa* at Vesāli, some Bhikkhus allege that Yasa has propounded a false doctrine to lay men; this is an *Anuvādādhikaraṇa* to be brought up before the *sangha* (see *Ibid*).

No. (iii)—At an *āvāsa* at Rājagaha, a nun named Mettiyā complains that a monk named Dabba has committed the sixth *Pācittiya* offence with her ("lying down to sleep in the same

place with a woman") ;—this is an *Āpattādhikaraṇa* to be brought formally before the *sangha*. (See the story of Dabba in Culla, IV, 4, 8, where the allegation is believed to be false and proceedings are taken against the complainant).

No. (iv)—At an *āvāsa*, X alleges that a certain *sangha-kamma* has not been attended with the requisite conditions, e.g., the minimum number was not made up ;—this is a *Kiccādhikaraṇa* which must be brought up before the *sangha*.

The importance of these rules for the settlement of disputes is emphasised in the following legend[12] :

A conversation between the Lord and Ananda, occasioned by the death of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, which was followed by dissensions in his Order, is reported. The Lord asks Ananda if such dissensions were likely in the *Sangha* after his own decease. Ananda says in reply that he apprehends occurrence of disputes over rules of discipline and 'the regimen of the *Pātimokkha*'. The Lord, however, does not feel concerned about that : "Of little concern, Ananda, are quarrels respecting the rigours of the *Vinaya*, or of the *Pātimokkha* : it is the possible quarrels in the *Sangha* about the Path or the course of training that really matters", for such differences, in his view, tend to divide the *Sangha*. So for their settlement, as the legend reports, the Lord lays down the 'Rules regulating settlement of disputes' (*Adhikaraṇa-samatha*).

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It was in the framework of this system and regimen that the life of a Bhikkhu at an *āvāsa* was carried on. In his personal life there was a large measure of freedom. From primitive Buddhism rites and ceremonies were alien,—there being only one single collective expression of congregational life, the fortnightly *Uposatha* service. The apparent void in religious life made by the absence of rites and ceremonies was filled by an intensive application to learning and self-culture.

For the promotion of them each *āvāsa* provided a system of training. It was usual for a newly admitted monk to live in tutelage with a senior of at least ten years' standing who was called in this relation an *Upajjhājya* or *Ācariya*. The

[12] Sāmagāma Sutta, MN: F-Dial, ii, p. 140.

tutelage period was normally fixed at ten years. The very word, *Brahmacariya*, meaning in Sanskrit 'the learner's stage of life', is taken to describe the condition of tutelage (*nissaya*).[18] The system was a guarantee for the conservation of monastic culture and learning. This culture and learning was not liberal in character, but cloistered and inbred, understood strictly in terms of comprehension and practice of the *Dhamma*.

Yet there was a progressive and dynamic side to it: it turned on doctrines and their explication.

The *Dhamma*, inherited by the first generation of monks from the Lord's teachings was embedded in scraps and fragments of oral tradition; it was systematised and also developed in the monks' *āvāsas* chiefly in its doctrinal contents. The task was by no means brief or easy.

In a *sangha* with its strong individualistic traditions a doctrine could not simply be 'laid down': before it could be established, it might have had to run the gauntlet of controversy and dispute, leading even to a *Vivādādhikaraṇa* and *Sanghakamma*. The aggregates and categories of doctrines, inset in the canonical legends, must have been settled by this delicately difficult process, and not evolved merely out of solitary cloistered cogitations of the learned. Most of the doctrinal categories are probably due to the industry, diligence and persuasiveness of the *Theras* ('Elderly Monks') among the early Buddhist monks of the first and second generations. They were truly 'Fathers of the Buddhist church'.

For the explication of the doctrines, again, an accepted system of exegesis was called for. It was called *Abhidhamma*. The Theravāda claim is that its own system of *Abhidhamma* is based on the Lord's own 'teaching method'. But there were divergent and opposing views, strongly held and energetically canvassed, in the exegesis of doctrines.

It is the situation envisaged in a legend in which the Lord calls upon his followers to school themselves in the cardinal doctrines of the religion. They are set forth, according to their set technical formulation, as the four Themes for Mindfulness (*Sati-paṭṭhāna*), the five Bases of Psychic Power (*Iddhipāda*), the fivefold Controls (*Indriya*), the five Powers (*Bala*), the seven Constitutents of Wisdom (*Bojjhaṅga*) and

[18] See Maha, I, 32, 1.

the Noble Eightfold Path. But the difficulty in mastering doctrines, as the Lord points out, is the existence of divergent views on what is called *Abhidhamma*.[14]

How earnestly these 'divergent views' were canvassed, with what unflagging eagerness, is reflected from a casual passage, cited below, in the canon.

The *Pavāraṇā*, which was a solemn ceremony marking the end of the Rain-retreat (*Vassa*), had to be curtailed on one occasion because the monks insisted on carrying on their debates and discussions too far into the night. There was no agreement in the assembly, and the experts and specialists in different branches of canonical lore were busy, doing their best :

> The greater part of the night had passed away while the Bhikkhus were in confusion: the Bhikkhus were reciting the *Dhamma*,—those versed in the *Suttantas* (Longer Discourses in the legends) were propounding the *Suttantas*; those versed in the *Vinaya* were discussing the *Vinaya*; the speakers on *Dhamma* (*Dhammakathikas*) were talking about the *Dhamma*.[15]

It is to be observed that the word, *Dhamma*, is used in a double sense in the passage above—first, in the clause 'the Bhikkhus were reciting the Dhamma', in the general sense of Religion as the word, *Dhamma*, has in the phrase, 'turning the Wheel of Dhamma', and, secondly, in the phrase 'speakers on Dhamma' in the special sense of Doctrine, and the 'expounders of doctrine' are called *Dhammakathikas* which means literally those who hold *kathās* (talks) on *Dhamma* or Doctrine.

This term, *Kathā*, seems to be used in the somewhat technical sense of 'oral discussion of doctrine'. Two Bhikkhus are described in a legend as holding an *Abhidhamma-kathā*, 'putting questions to one another, furnishing answers and not collapsing, but gaining edification by their discussion'.[16] The title of the outstanding polemical work on doctrines in the Pali canon is "Issues of *Kathas*" (*Kathāvatthu*). The special subject-matter of these *kathās* is distinguished terminologically from *dhamma* in its general sense. It is called

[14] Kinti Sutta, MN, ii, 238 ff (F-Dial, Vol. II, pp. 136 ff).
[15] Maha, IV, 15, 4—VT, i, p. 339.
[16] Mahāgosiṅga Sutta (MN, i, p. 214)—' Dve bhikkhū abhidhammakathaṁ kathenti, etc.'

Abhidhamma, meaning 'elucidation of the extra and special significance of the *dhamma*'.[17] These doctrinal discussions and debates seem to have been a prominent feature of *sangha* life and activity.

Their gist was collected in treatises: they make up the third part of the Pali canon, *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*.

* * * * *

There are seven such treatises which, however, do not all belong to the same stratum of development.

But the oldest of them were undoubtedly shaped out of the fluid material of actual oral debates and discussions. These treatises indicate the gradual development of a Methodology in monastic learning for the purpose of explication of doctrines. It started from a concept of the Lord's 'teaching method'. Did there exist any tradition among the early makers of Buddha-legends about the Lord's 'teaching method'? On this question Rhys Davids is of opinion, as we have noted,[18] that there was. Part of that tradition must have been that he was an Analyser or Divider (*Vibhajjavādin*). Perhaps the word, *Vibhajjavādin*, originally meant one whose method was to divide a matter posited into its component parts and deal with each part separately in his answer, and not with the whole matter in *en-toto* fashion (*ekaṁsavāda*).

The method is well illustrated by a legend in which a Brāhmaṇa named Subha elicits the Lord's opinions on various matters, one of which is whether the busy life of a man of the world is to be preferred or a monk's reposeful life. The Lord does not take up the question in that summary fashion; he professes himself to be a *Vibhajjavādin*. He divides it up point by point. "The busy life", says he, "may be a failure or a success. So too the life of repose. Take first the busy life. Agriculture, however busily pursued, may fail and bear little fruit; or it may succeed and bear much fruit. On the other hand, commerce, pursued without bustle, may also fail or succeed. Just as agriculture, however busily pursued, may prove a failure, so may the life of a busy man, or it may

[17] The canonical commentary interprets 'Abhidhamma' thus: 'Atireka-visesattha-dīpaka hi attho abhisaddo'.

[18] See *supra*, pp. 44–45.

succeed, and so the busy man's life. Just too, commerce, carried on without bustle, may fail or succeed, so too the monk's life ".[19] The answer is long and cumbrous: its gist is that mere busy living is no criterion of success or failure in life. But the manner of the answer is noticeable: the general statement is broken up into particular points and clauses in strict *Vibhajja* fashion.[20]

This 'part-by-part' method,—'the method of division or analysis' (*Vibhajja*),—is what the monks must have followed in drawing up categories of doctrine like the 'Noble Eightfold Path', 'Seven Constituents of Wisdom' 'Five Controls', etc. From the tradition that the Lord in his teaching was a follower of this analytic method, it seems to have acquired a sort of sanctity; it came to be regarded, in the treatment of doctrines, as the sole test of orthodoxy.

This test of orthodoxy is said to have been actually applied on one supposedly historic occasion in the reign of Asoka. Heretical intruders, 'who knew not the true faith', are said to have filled the *Sangha* and it badly needed a purge which was effected under imperial authority. The legend relates how only those who adhered to the Lord's own method of *Vibhajjavāda* were allowed to remain in the *Sangha* and the rest were expelled.[21] The purge is said to have left the field clear for the *Theras* ('Elders'). *Vibhajjavāda* and *Theravāda* have since become interchangeable names,[22] and the Pali canon of the Theravāda school is supposed to retain the pristine purity of the Lord's own method. The method was followed in the monkish debates and discussions.

* * * * *

The *Abhidhamma* section of the Pali canon is at once the result and exemplification of the method,—exegesis, analysis, explication by division and sub-division of a topic, and the drawing up of categories. Apart from the *Abhidhamma*, there are two

[19] Subha Sutta, MN (F-Dial, ii, pp. 113–114). The passage is abridged.

[20] *Vibhajjavāda* is contradistinguished from *Ekaṁsavāda*. *Vibhajja* means 'by division' and *Ekaṁsa* means 'one part'. The contradistinction seems to lie in 'putting a matter as one whole' and 'putting it part by part', as is done in *Subha Sutta*.

[21] The legend occurs in the Ceylonese chronicles as well as in the introduction to the *Kathāvatthu* (See P. of C., p. 7).
About the historicity, see *infra*, p. 156.

[22] See Winternitz, Vol. II, p. 6, footnote 2, and D–PTS under *Vibhajja*.

remarkable literary monuments to the method in the *Sutta* section too. The first is a commentarial work called *Niddesa* (Explanations), divided into two books, 'Great' (*Mahā*) and 'Small' (*Culla*): the second is a work in the form of catechism on the doctrinal categories, called *Patisaṁbhidā-magga* (the Way of Analysis).[23] Their contents, remarkably varied in character,—lexicon, commentary, glossary, summary, etc.,—bear testimony to a sustained and regular academic side to the pursuits of monastic life.

Abhidhamma was the special line of intellectual activity of the monks.

The main purpose of *Abhidhamma* is the explication of doctrines, and the first work listed in the *Abhidhamma* section of the Pali canon is typical. It is entitled *Dhamma-saṅgaṇi* (Collection of *Dhammas*),—the term, *Dhamma*, being used in the technical sense of a psychological basis of ethics. "The method of the book", says Mrs. Rhys Davids, "is explicative, deductive; its object was, not to add to the Dhamma, but to unfold the orthodox import of terms in use among the body of the faithful, and by organising and systematizing the aggregate of doctrinal concepts, to render the learner's intellect both clear and efficient".[24]

But a little undergrowth of speculative thinking also appeared in *Abhidhamma*—ontological speculations centring in the problems of Personality (*puggala*).[25] They brought in their train the beginnings of what is termed 'Buddhology' that grew slowly into such prodigious importance later on in the system of the faith.

In the *Puggala-paññatti* (Designation of Person-types), which is one of the earliest of *abhidhamma* works in the Pali canon,[26] the nature of the Buddha-personality is already mooted.[27] The question there—'What is the nature of the Buddha?'—is like a seed, 'the little seed that grows a bulk and lays on every side a thousand arms'. Out of it sprang those unending Buddhological speculations that, spreading

[23] These works have been edited and published by PTS. For their contents, see Winternitz, Vol. II, 156–157 and HPL, Vol. I, pp. 277–285.

[24] DS, p. XVI.

[25] This is the theme of the Pali *abhidhamma* work entitled *Puggala-paññatti*.

[26] See *Buddhist India*, p. 188.

[27] *Puggala-paññatti*, IX, 1.

through different schools of Buddhism, paved the way for the Mahāyāna, and in its metaphysics and philosophy found a fresh lease of life.

Raised early in the monks' *abhidhamma-kathās*, the question persisted with a strange vitality: every phase of Buddhist development centred in that question.

But the Buddha-personality, posed in the *Puggala-puññatti*, is of no central importance in the Theravāda. It was covered by an already accepted Buddha-concept which was not arrived at speculatively so much as derived from tradition and legends based upon tradition. Its main features were as follows :—

(i) That the Lord is a Superman, distinguishable by his physiognomy (*Lakkhaṇa*) ;
(ii) That he possesses supernormal or supernatural attributes like the *Balas* (Spiritual Powers) and the *Iddhis* (Psychic Potencies),—the attributes which in Indian thought are ascribed to a Yogin ;
(iii) That he, having conquered all the *Āsavas* (Imperfections) and become a Buddha, is confined to no category of being, earthly or celestial ;
(iv) That he, among all those who rise to the spiritual status of Buddhahood, is unique in that he is the supreme Teacher, the propagator of his own 'enlightenment' (*Sammā-sambuddha*) ;
(v) That his Buddhahood is the culmination of a series of pre-births as potential Buddha (*Boddhisatta*).

* * * * *

This in outline was the system of *sangha* life at an *āvāsa* in its collective organisation and its cultural pursuits,—the life of a community of homeless and kinless religious men who lived in corporate bodies in scattered monastic establishments under the governance of their sacred *Vinaya* laws. They constituted but one of several communities that made up the population ;—a 'Buddhist India', properly so called, never existed nor ever was there a homogeneous or uniform society in this land.

This monk community, however, had one important feature : it had a system of self-government of its own,—its own ways and methods of resolving and determining all affairs arising out of its communal life under laws framed by itself and applicable to itself.

Ancient Indian polity and statecraft extended to such a community the right of self-determination.

What to the Buddhist monks was *Vinaya* had also a constitutional aspect : juridically it was their *Samaya* or ' Conventional Law '.

The ancient Indian law-codes, written in Sanskrit, explain *Samaya* and its constitutional consequences, and a little rummaging in the texts bearing upon it serves to explain not only why political unsettlements and revolutions of all kinds left the life of the *āvāsas* intact but throws light also on some much-misinterpreted edicts of Emperor Asoka.

Nārada, a comparatively late writer on jurisprudence, defines *Samaya* thus : " The established laws of sects, guilds, etc. are called *Samaya* and the violation thereof is a cause of legal dispute. The king, in the city and the country, must protect the *samaya* of sects, guilds, classes, corporations, armies, associations, etc."[28] An earlier writer, Yājñavalkya, lays down that if Conventional Law (*Samaya*) be not opposed to Positive Law (called ' the king's own dhamma '), it must be as carefully maintained as the latter, and that, with regard to corporations, the king's duty is two-fold,—the preservation of their customs and usages and the prevention of divisions in them.[29] Manu distinguishes three types of corporations—Village Communities (*Grāma*), Local Associations (*Deśa*) and Occupational or Social Groups (*Sangha*), and his commentator Medhātithi defines the last as ' groups of persons of the same persuasion drawn from different groups and localities ', citing as examples, ' Sangha of the Bhikṣus ', ' Sangha of the merchants ' and ' Sangha of learned men versed in the Four Vedas '.[30] Here we find the *Bhikkhusangha* of the Buddhists expressly mentioned as a type of

[28] Nārada X, 1–2 : ' Pāṣaṇḍinaigamādīnāṁ sthitiḥ samaya uccate : Samayasyāpakaraṇaṁ tad vivādapadaṃ smritaṁ : Pāṣandinaigamaśreni pūgavrātagaṇādiṣu : Saṁrakṣet samayaṃ rājā durge janapadeṣu ca '.

The term *Samaya* is a technical one in Sanskrit jurisprudence. In Pali the term has no such significance (See D–PTS under *Samaya*).

[29] Yājñavalkya, ii, 186–192 : ' Nijadharmāvirodhena yastu sāmayiko bhavet : So ' pi yatnena saṁrakṣyo dharmī rājakritagñaḥ saḥ.

And :

' *Ś*reṇinaigamapāṣaṇḍagaṇānām'pyaṁ vidhih
Bhedam c'aiṣām nṛpo rakṣet pūrvavrittiñca pālayet '.

[30] Manu, VIII, 219 and Medhātithi's comment : ' Ekadharmānugatānāṁ nānādeśavāsināṁ nānājātīyānāmapi samuhaḥ : yathā Bhikṣuṇāṁ saṁgho vaṇijāṁ saṁghasčaturvidyānāṁ saṁgha iti '.

corporation, the 'conventional law' of which is within a king's proper function to maintain.

None of these texts, however, goes back to the reign of Asoka. The text of Manu just cited occurs in the code passing under his name, which, according to Jayaswal, was composed by a legist named Sumati Bhārgava during the early years of the Śuṅga dynasty that succeeded the Maurya about the middle of 2nd century, B.C.[31] Yājñavalkya flourished, according to the same authority, in the mid-Kuṣān period in the first century, either B.C. or A.D., and Nārada in the early Gupta times in the 6th century A.D.[32] But the antiquity of the principles, which the legists deduce from ancient constitutional practice, is hardly affected by the dates of compilation of the codes.

These constitutional ideas, formulated by ancient legists, regarding the king's duty of upholding the conventional law of *sanghas* and other corporations, of protecting their integrity, and of intervening in cases of violation of their laws, are solvent of a flourishing fiction of ancient Indian history, viz., that the great Buddhist emperor Asoka "ruled" the Buddhist church (*sic*) as its head.

We can see on the other hand why the pious emperor, keenly alive to his constitutional duties, founded the institution of the "Chief Commissioners of the *Dhamma*" (*Dhamma-mahāmātā*) for the protection of the interests of all sects (*pakhaṇḍas*) and tried, by promulgating the old *Vinaya* law of schism, to check fissiparous tendencies that had become pronounced in his time in the Buddhist *Sangha*.[33] In the text of Yājñavalkya just cited, it is said: "The king should prevent division (*bheda*) in corporate bodies", and Asoka performs this constitutional duty in respect of the Buddhist *Sangha* by proclaiming the law as enacted in the *Vinaya* relating to schism (*sangha-bheda*).[34]

[31] K. P. Jayaswal's *Manu and Yājñavalkya* (Calcutta, 1930), pp. 43–44.
[32] See *Ibid.*, pp. 60 and 64.
[33] See *infra*, p. 217.
[34] See *infra*, p. 159.

IX

SECTS AND SCHOOLS

THERE is an ancient tradition in Buddhism that, within a couple of centuries of the Lord's decease, as many as eighteen sects appeared 'within the *sāsana*'.

The term, *Sāsana*, is perhaps the nearest ancient equivalent of the modern expression, Buddhism. In its developed sense, it denotes a System.[1] It has a socio-religious content and is used as a term of delimitation, with a touch perhaps of communal consciousness too,—'within the *sāsana*' meaning 'within the Buddhist system of faith and its rule of living'.

The absence of any centralized authority within the System, however, anything like an 'established church', rendered somewhat indeterminate the question of conformity or non-conformity to the *sāsana*. The Theravāda School, as we have seen, tried to establish itself in that position of authority by the fiction that its own canon was definitive: other schools were in its view heterodox and their tenets heresies. But the tradition of the religion itself from the beginning had been extraordinarily tolerant of 'free thinking' and left wide latitude for what the Theravāda from its orthodox point of view regarded as non-conformity and dissent.

It is not known when exactly a distinct 'sect within the *sāsana*' first appeared in Buddhism: the traditions about it are late and not very reliable. But we can see from the canonical legends that the seeds of sectarianism were inherent in monastic life itself,—in its constitution, rules and practices, even in its very intellectual and spiritual atmosphere.

While there was a complete absence of authoritarian control in a *sangha*, there was also no tradition of obedience in matters

[1] *Sāsana* means etymologically 'order', 'ordainment', 'injunction', etc. But it is used in the abstract sense of a System (cf. Institutes), in both *Dīpavaṁsa* and the commentary on the *Kathāvatthu*, to mean the system represented by the laws and doctrines of Buddhism. In the *Kathāvatthu*, we have this sense in the phrase, 'sāsanam navakatam', in XXI, 1.

of faith and belief. Between the senior and the junior in a monastic community, the key-note of relationship was but respect and reverence.[2] The legends tell of 'specialists' in different branches of canonical lore, of learned Bhikkhus, of teachers and instructors (*ācariya* and *upajjhāya*), of elderly members (*theras*), but of no one in a *sangha*, however eminent, who was in a position to impose his views and opinions as binding and authoritative on others.

An apocryphal tradition, however, grew up in Ceylon that in the Buddhist community there had been a 'Succession of Preceptors' (*ācariya-paraṁparā*) who handed down the *Vinaya*, from Upāli to Tissa of Asoka's reign.[3] There is no basis for it in the *Vinayapiṭaka* itself in which a Preceptor (*ācariya*) always stands in relation to a single Bhikkhu or a group of Bhikkhus, but decidedly not in relation to the corporate body, the *sangha*. It is the picture of a purely individualistic society that the *Vinayapiṭaka* presents, in which the Lord's *dhamma-vinaya* was apt to be peculiarly exposed to vagaries of individual interpretation.

The following is a sample given in a legend of the canon[4] of the kind of wrangling (*viggāhika-kathā*) that used to break out among the monks over the interpretation of *Dhamma-vinaya*: two monks assailing each other in sharp stychomyth thus:

> "You don't understand this *dhamma-vinaya*. I do."
> "How should *you* know about this *dhamma-vinaya*?"
> "You have fallen into wrong views. It is I who am in the right."
>
> "I am speaking to the point, you are not."
> "You are putting last what ought to come first, and first what ought to come last.
> "What you've cogitated so long, that's all quite upset."
> "Your challenge has been taken up."
> "You are proved to be wrong."
> "Set to work to clear your views."
> "Disentangle yourself if you can."[5]

It is said that the Lord disapproved of such wranglings. In any case, a period was put to them when the *Sangha*

[2] See, EBM, p. 144.
[3] Dpv., 5, 103–107; see also EBM, p. 140.
[4] In the Brahmajāla Suttanta, DN.
[5] Dial, i, p. 14.

devised a constitutional means of settling differences of this kind (under the rules of *Adhikaraṇa-samatha*), as we have seen in the last chapter.[6]

A dispute over a point of *Dhamma-vinaya* was technically a *Vivāda* (Disagreement in *vāda* or opinion).[7] The point of disagreement could be brought up for settlement before the corporate body, the decision being by vote of majority (*Yebhuyyasikā*), ascertained by ballot.

In the *sangha* itself, the point decided could not be raised again on the principle of *res judicata*: to do so would be a grave ecclesiastical offence.[8] But if the intention of the party was to divide the *sangha* over the dispute and bring about a schism, no constraint, consistently with the tradition of *Sangha* life and organization, could be used: the Lord's injunction to the Bhikkhus being to be 'Lamps (or Islands) unto themselves'. There are several passages in the canon in which the desirability of maintaining unity and concord among the monks is emphasized,[9] but the tacit reservation always is that it must not be at the cost of liberty of personal faith and conviction. The right to schism is in fact not only recognised, but even safeguarded. The intention to bring about a schism in a *sangha* is not held to be condemnable in itself. What is condemned is *dishonest* intention or mere wilfulness,—to produce a schism without an adequate ground,—out of mere caprice or party spirit.[10] To base it on dishonest opinion,—an opinion not held with conviction,—is merely cursed and condemned.[11] The restriction on the right to schism is thus only a moral, not a legal one.

A schism (*Sangha-bheda*) is validly initiated by the formation of a party of at least nine qualified members in a *sangha*; a party of less number can bring about only what is called a disunion (*Sangha-rāji*).[12] When a schism did actually take

[6] *Supra*, p. 112.

[7] Culla, IV, 14, 2.

[8] Pācittiya, No. 63—Yo pana bhikkhu jānaṁ yathādhammaṁ nihitādhikaraṇaṁ punakammāya ukkoteyya pācittiyam.

[9] Culla, VII, 3, 16 (the Lord's exhortation to Devadatta); Sāmagāma Sutta, MN; Culla, VII, 5, 4 (Gāthā quoted).

[10] Culla, VII, 5, 5 and 6, where a distinction is made between those who go to Hell for their efforts to divide the *sangha* and those who do not go to Hell for them.

[11] Culla VII, 5, 4.

[12] Culla, VII, 5, 1–2.

place, the original *sangha* would be split up into two *sanghas*, holding their congregational functions in separate assemblies.[13] It seems that it was at first considered allowable for them to live within the limits of the same *āvāsa*, but this was afterwards negatived.[14] But the schismatic party might subsequently coalesce, performing a token act, what was called a 'complete *uposatha*' (*samajja-uposatha*).[15] But in such a case, the ground of difference must entirely disappear, not be merely covered up.[16]

The right of a dissident party to separate from a *sangha* was thus a well-recognized one and it seems that it was freely exercised. Differences of interpretation of *Dhamma*, *Vinaya* and *Pātimokkha*,—all the possible points of difference of opinion (*vivāda*) being put in a category of eighteen,[17]—would create valid ground for a schism.

* * * * *

The earliest account of schismatic divisions in Buddhism is given in the *Dīpavaṁsa*, which, seeing that it carries on its narrative up to the year A.D. 302, must have been written not long after that date. The author, living many centuries after the happenings recorded, had for his source of information only the traditions of them, as preserved in the Theravāda school of Buddhism in Ceylon. It is neither a very reliable nor a perfectly impartial account. But, as throwing a revealing light on the actual process of growth of a Buddhist sect, the *Dīpavaṁsa* version is of first importance.

The key-words in the account are *Bheda* (Schism) and *Vāda* (School). We know from the *Vinayapiṭaka* how a *Bheda* in a *sangha* could be brought about,—briefly, by the formation of a party of nine or more who must be duly qualified members of the *sangha* and must hold a dissident opinion with honest conviction on any of the eighteen specified points. After having claimed the indefeasible right to make a schism,

[13] Culla, VII, 5, 3: The two parties after the schism are said to perform *Uposatha*, *Pavāraṇā* and *Sanghakammas* independently.

[14] Culla, XII, 1, 10—Avāsākappa (Separate Uposathas by Bhikkhus dwelling within the same boundary are declared unconstitutional).

[15] Maha, X, 5, 14.

[16] The union must be, it is said, 'according to the spirit' (*atthapeta*), and not merely 'according to the letter' (*vyañjanapeta*). See Maha, X, 6, 2.

[17] Maha, X, 5, 4–5; Culla, VII, 5, 2.

they must, according to the revised rule, remove to a different locality outside the *āvāsa* boundaries and form a separate communion there.

The author of the *Dīpavaṁsa* assumes that the secessionist party should have a leader[18]: he is called an *Ācariya*. Also in the *Kathāvatthu* commentary, the Mahāsanghikas, the first body of schismatics, are called 'Ācariya's clan' (*Ācariyakula*).[19] It is likely that on some occasion a learned Bhikkhu, propounding a dissident doctrine or rule in a *sangha*, would form a party and initiate a schism. The school arising out of the schism might take its name from him. But the word, *ācariya*, in the sense of 'leader of a schismatic party', occurs nowhere in the canon where it always means the 'teacher' of a single Bhikkhu or of a group.[20]

A *Bheda* (Schism) might give rise to a *Vāda* (School), and the process of emergence of a *vāda* from a *bheda* becomes clear from the *Dīpavaṁsa* account. The seceding party would proceed to make a new recension of the scripture in the light of their dissident doctrines. The first batch of secessionists, the Mahāsanghikas, are reported to have done so and the same is said to have been done by other schismatic parties. How far these several scriptural recensions were complete canons, consisting of the *Sutta*, *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* sections, is, however, an open question, for, except the canon of the Theravāda, the recensions of other schools have come down to us in fragments only.

* * * * *

The formation of the first school of schismatics is thus described:

> The Bhikkhus of the Mahāsangha schism settled a doctrine contrary to the (orthodox) *sāsana*. Splitting up the original corpus of the canon (*mūla-saṁgahaṁ*), they made a different collection. They transposed the *Suttas* which belonged to one place (of the collection) to another place; they destroyed the meaning and the doctrine (*atthaṁ dhammañ ca*) in the *Vinaya*

[18] The *Dīpavaṁsa*, after its account of the different schools (*Vādas*), concludes the section with the formula—'Here ends the section on the schools founded by teachers' (Dpv., p. 38, end of 5, 54—'ācariyavādaṁ niṭṭhitaṁ').

[19] See P. of C., p. xliv and p. 3, footnote.

[20] See EBM, pp. 180–181.

> and in the five Nikāyas. Those Bhikkhus, who understood neither what had been taught in the Long Expositions nor without exposition, neither the natural meaning nor the recondite meaning, settled a different meaning in connection with the discourses (*bhaṇitam*); these Bhikkhus destroyed a great deal of the (true) meaning under the colour of the letter. Rejecting single passages of the *suttas* and of the profound *vinaya*, they composed other *suttas* and another *vinaya* . . . Rejecting the following texts (*which are named*), they composed new ones. Forsaking the original rules regarding nouns, genders, composition, and the embellishment of style, they changed all that.[21]

Out of this first schismatic school, which made this new recension of the canon, five others are said to have come in course of time into existence, and each of these five is said to have done the same as the parent body:

> All these five sects originating from the Mahāsanghikas, split the meaning and the doctrine and some portions of the Collection; setting aside some portions of difficult passages, they altered them, forsaking the original rules regarding nouns, genders, composition, and the embellishments of style, they changed all that.[22]

Out of the original Theravāda, from which the Mahāsanghikas had separated, there also arose eleven schools and the process of their formation was the same. Thus we have the full tale of eighteen schools, founded by eighteen sects, viz., the School of the Theras (Theravāda) and eleven subsidiary schools, and the School of the Mahāsanghikas and five subsidiary schools. The two main schools in the *Dīpavaṁsa* account are thus the Theravāda and the Mahāsanghika.

But the tradition on which the account is based is a frankly partial one: it represents the *vāda* (school) of the Theras under the figure of the parent tree and all other *vādas* as thorns upon it: "The excellent Theravāda is the great banyan (*nigrodha*) tree: it represents the *sāsana* of the Lord (*Jina*) without omissions or additions. The remaining *vādas* grew up like thorns upon that great tree".[23] The figure of the banyan tree is somewhat spoiled, as Mrs. Rhys Davids points out, by the author's weakness of botanical knowledge.[24]

[21] Dpv., 5. 32–38.
[22] *Ibid.*, 5. 49–50.
[23] *Ibid.*, 5. 52.
[24] P. of C., p. XXXV.

But it involves also a *petitio principii*, for it is on the question what the true *sāsana* of the Lord is that all schisms 'within the *sāsana*' must needs arise.

About the 'Great Schism' (*Mahābheda*)[25] which led to the rise of the Mahāsaṅghika *vāda* against the Theravāda, other traditions than those recorded in the *Dīpavaṁsa* are variant at every point with regard to (i) the initiators, (ii) the cause of the dispute, (iii) the venue of the schism, and (iv) the age.

The *Dīpavaṁsa* connects it up with the *Cullavagga* account of the 'Council' of Vesāli. After recounting the tale, as recorded in the canon, of the Vajji monks, whose claim for relaxation of certain points of Vinaya was rejected, the *Dīpavaṁsa* narrative carries it further on. The sequel is added to the canonical story that the Vajji schismatics proceeded to set up a *vāda* of their own. The origin of the dispute, however, could hardly lead to sequelæ of this magnitude: the dispute is said to have been limited to 'ten points' of *Vinaya*, which were by no means of central importance, and the rise of a separate School out of it seems somewhat difficult logically to believe. The difficulty is increased by the reticence on this point of the other Ceylonese chronicle, *Mahāvaṁsa*, composed two centuries later than the *Dīpavaṁsa* and evidently based upon the latter. The *Mahāvaṁsa* describes the schism (*bleda*), but it stops there, omitting reference to any school (*vāda*) arising from it.

The 'Great Schism', which first divided the *Sāsana* into two principal schools, out of which many others arose in the course of time, was an ancient event in Buddhist history. Obscure and confused traditions about it were all that could have survived in after-ages. While the *Dīpavaṁsa* speaks of the moot-points of *Vinaya* of the Vesāli 'Council' as having been the ground for the schism, later works speak of only points of doctrine, relating mostly to Arhatship, raised not by the Vajji monks, but by one Mahādeva.

* * * * *

The Tibetan collection of Buddhist canonical books preserves two main works and a subsidiary one (in Tibetan

[25] Dpv., 5, 16.

version) on the doctrines of different schools of Buddhism,—by Bhavya, Vasumitra and Vinītadeva respectively.[26]

About the rise of the Mahāsanghika School, Bhavya records two variant traditions—one, preserved by the Sammitīya School, to the effect that an assembly was held at Pāṭaliputra 137 years after the Lord's decease 'in the reign of Nanda and Mahāpadma' to settle a controversy over Five Points (raised by Mahādeva) and that its sequel was the formation of the Mahāsanghika school; the other, supposed to be a tradition current among the *Sthaviras* (*Theras*, of which school is not mentioned), that the assembly was held 160 years after the Lord's decease at Pāṭaliputra under Asoka (Dhammāsoka,—the name by which Asoka is mentioned in Buddhist literature) on some controversial matters (*vivāda-vastu*), and that it resulted in the rise of that school. This last tradition is corroborated by Vasumitra, of whose work there are Chinese translations by Hsüan-tsang and Paramārtha, and he speaks of an assembly at Pāṭaliputra held under Asoka a hundred years after the Decease to settle the Five Points (of Mahādeva) resulting in the emergence of the Mahāsanghika School.[27]

The origin of this school, the great ancient rival of the Theravāda, is thus caught up in an inextricable tangle of traditions. The old questions remain outstanding,—When and where did the 'Great Schism' take place? What was the real ground of the difference,—the nature of the *vivāda*? Who actually brought about the schism?

Attempts have been made to rationalize the discrepant traditions. One hypothesis is that there had been in fact a composite ground of difference for the schism, but the Ceylonese tradition fixed upon that part of it, viz., *Vinaya*, which seemed to the orthodox monks of the Theravāda school to be more important, while traditions preserved by the later scholars and schoolmen, Bhavya and Vasumitra, were those which related to the doctrinal part in which they were more interested.[28] That the Five Points mentioned by Bhavya

[26] Rockhill, p. 181.

[27] See JRAS, 1910 (*The Five Points of Mahādeva* by Poussin), p. 414; translation of Hsüan-tsang's version of Vasumitra's work by Masuda in *Journal, C.U.*, 1920, p. 5; also Paramārtha's version (Chinese) in the 'Origin of the Buddhist Sects according to Paramārtha' by P. Démeville in *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques*, 1931–'32, Brussels, 1932, pp. 15–64.

[28] See EHS, pp. 231–232.

and Vasumitra, were not mythical or illusory, but had been subjects of debate and were actually debated in ancient times, has been proved by Poussin's identification of them with a set of 'heresies' noted in the *Kathāvatthu*. The first four of them are in the nature of an attack on the presumption cherished by the Theravāda of an Arhat's perfections,—heresies ascribed by the commentator on the *Kathāvatthu* to sub-sects of the Mahāsanghikas.[29]

* * * * *

The religion of the Lord after his decease, was, as we have seen, being moulded by the Theras.[30] The first revolt against it is represented by the rise of the Mahāsanghika School. The antiquity of the school is undoubted: it probably dates back to pre-Asokan times, even to the 4th century, B.C.

The importance of the Mahāsanghika School in the history of Buddhism and of the development of Buddhist thought must have been very great, though its canon not being extant, we do not exactly know how the *Dhamma-vinaya* was shaped by this school. If the *corpus* of its original scripture were available, it would perhaps have been possible to trace in the later developments of Buddhism, where these developments are inconsistent with the Theravāda, the long trail of its influence, of which, however, there is now only some vague general corroboration.

The author of the *Dīpavaṁsa*, for instance, mentions the Theravāda and the Mahāsanghika as the two main schools of Buddhism,—the others as their outgrowths. As the rival of the Theravāda, it continued, as long as Buddhism was a living religion in India, to influence Buddhist thought. I-tsing, the last of the Chinese pilgrims who have left records of their Indian experiences, refers to it as one of the 'four principal schools' existing in his time which is the latter part of the 7th Century, A.D.[31]

While the Theravāda School has come to light through the

[29] See JRAS, 1910, p. 416. The Kathāvatthu 'heresies' are: (i) An Arhat may commit a sin under unconscious temptation, (ii) One may be an Arhat and not know it, (iii) An Arhat may have doubts on matters of doctrine, and (iv) One cannot attain Arhatship without the help of a teacher (Kv., ii, 1–5).

[30] See *supra*, p. 93.

[31] Takakasu, pp. xxiii–xxiv.

preservation of its complete canon in Ceylon, the Mahāsanghika lies in obscurity. We can, therefore, only guess at the ground for the '*Mahā-bheda*'.

It would seem that the two schools were divergent in their tendencies,—one monkish and conservative, adhering to the primitive conception of the Lord as *Satthā* and of the *Sāsana* as discipline and practice; the other more liberal and popular, less strict in the practical part of the religion, and favouring those concepts of the Lord and those forms of piety in which the popular and the monk minds could agree.

The name, *Mahāsangha* (Great Order), is suggestive. *Sangha* meant a monastic community and its connotation in the Theravāda canon is definite. But *Mahāsangha* is only a made-up word, intended to convey a new idea. Literally it would connote a circle wider than the *Sangha* or the community of monks. The term, *Mahāsanghika*, is not explained in the *Dīpavaṁsa*, but is said to refer to the great numerical strength (10,000) of the schismatics.[32] But three centuries later an explanation comes from Hsüan-tsang,—and this scholar-pilgrim, who had imbibed the learning of the Mahāsanghika school at its headquarters at Dhanakaṭaka,[33] would be expected to know the traditional meaning of the name of the school.

The following is Hsüan-tsang's account of the origin of the school and of the name it came to bear:

> Going west from this point (in Magadha) . . . is a *stūpa* (mound) built by Asoka Rājā. This is the spot where the Great Assembly (*Mahāsangha*) was held. Those who had not been permitted to join Kāsyapa's assembly (*—the Theravāda tradition being that all but the adherents of its own school were expelled therefrom,*[34]), whether learners or Arhats, to the number of 100,000 men, came together to this spot and said, "While the Tathāgata was alive, we all had a common master, but now that the King of the Law is dead, it is different. We too wish to show our gratitude to the Buddha and we also will hold an assembly for the collecting of the scriptures". On this the common folk with the holy personages came to the assembly, the foolish and the wise alike flocked together . . . *And because in*

[32] 5, 31—'dasasahassi samagantvā akaṁsu dhammasaṁgaham: tasyāṁ dhammasaṅgīti mahāsaṅgīti vuccati'.

[33] Beal, Vol. II, p. 221 (Watters, Vol. II, 217).

[34] See account of the Assembly held under Asoka at Pāṭaliputra in the Ceylonese chronicles and in the commentary on the *Kathāvatthu*.

this assembly both common folk and holy personages (*Arhats*) *were mixed together, it was called Mahāsangha.*[35]

As we compare Hsüan-tsang's account, derived most probably from a Mahāsanghika source, with the Theravāda account in the *Dīpavaṁsa*, the inwardness of the Mahāsanghika movement becomes clearer. It was a revolt against the 'cloistering' of the Lord's teachings,—reducing them to a purely monkish religion. The Arhats among the monks were arrogating to themselves the right of settling the character of the religion, of moulding the *dhamma*, and, if the Five Points of Mahādeva had anything to do with the rise of the Mahāsanghika school, it is significant that they are mainly directed against the presumptions of the infallibility of Arhats.[36] If again it was the Vajjis who brought about the preliminary schism, it is again significant that their chief town Vesāli had been a favourite resort of the Lord in his lifetime, where his teachings would be remembered and handed down in oral tradition, and the Vajjis would naturally revolt against what they considered to be the monkish perversion of those teachings. The name, 'Mahāsangha', was the symbol of their liberalizing movement.

* * * * *

The wreckage of tradition about the Mahāsanghika School, the great rival of the Theravāda, may now be pieced together:—that the scripture of the Mahāsanghika School was settled by Arhats and common folk together; that the name, *Mahāsangha*, was used for the assembly; and that the assembly was not allowed to be composed exclusively of monks.

A main point of the Mahāsanghika repudiation of the Theravāda thus emerges, however dimly. The Theravāda bound up the *Dhamma* with the monastic life and the *Vinaya* with its practice and regulations, making it up as a religion for monkhood. But the *Vinaya* had perhaps a different aspect with the Mahāsanghikas. Monastic life was only a special way with which the *Dhamma* was not necessarily co-extensive nor was the *Vinaya* identical with the rules of monastic life. It is certainly curious and perhaps significant that

[35] Beal, Vol. II, pp. 164–165. The italics and the gloss are mine.
[36] See *supra*, p. , footnote.

the *Mahāvastu*, purporting to be the 'Vinaya' of a Mahāsanghika sect, contains no monastic *regula* as the *Vinaya-piṭaka* of the Theravāda does.[37] The *Dīpavaṁsa* speaks of the Mahāsanghikas as transposing parts of the scriptural collection, of 'composing other *suttas* and another *vinaya*'. It may very well be an allusion to the fact that the Mahāsanghikas effaced the clean-out division between *Sutta* and *Vinaya* that characterises the Theravāda canon.

Whether the Mahāsanghika School originated at Pāṭaliputra or at Vesāli,—and considering its antiquity and its probable pre-Asokan origin, Vesāli rather than Pāṭaliputra, which dated only from the beginning of the Maurya age, would be a venue more likely,—the adherents of the school were widespread over the whole of India.

The evidence for this is now mainly archæological.

It is said by Bhavya that Mahādeva, the putative originator of the schism, " came to and took up his residence on a mountain, where there is a *Caitya*, and, professing the Five Points of the Mahāsanghikas, created the sect called *Caitika* ".[38] The place indicated can be identified safely with Cetiyagiri, the ancient name of Sānchi (in Central India), from the Great Tope standing on a plateau on its outskirts.[39] Not far south of it is Dhanakaṭaka (modern name, Amarāvatī). Dhanakaṭaka seems to have been a centre of the Mahāsanghikas for centuries. Inscriptions, discovered at Amarāvatī in the course of archæological survey, refer to the school *Cetiyavāda*[40] which, according to Bhavya, was founded by Mahādeva on the basis of the doctrines of the Mahāsanghika school. Of *Cetiyavāda* there were again two off-shoots deriving their names from their local habitation within Amarāvatī—the East Cliffers (*Pubbaselika*) and the West Cliffers (*Abaraselika*).

[37] See *infra*, pp. 145–146, where the point is dealt with.
[38] See JRAS, 1910, p. 415.
[39] See *infra* for Sānchi and the 'Great Tope', pp. 172 ff.
[40] *Report of the Archæological Survey of Southern India*, Vol. I, 1883, pp. 100–101. It is a point of interest what the name of the school signifies. Is it a place-name or a credo-name ? The latter possibility is suggested by the indication of the existence of a 'Caitya' cult in ancient Amarāvatī. When the Buddha-image appeared in sculpture, the normal manner of representing the Decease was to show the recumbent figure. But the old Caitya symbol of the Decease persisted at Amarāvatī. See Plate IV in BBA and Foucher's comment: " The curious circumstance is that on this point (representing the Decease in sculpture), the school of Amarāvatī has remained obstinately faithful to the ancient device of the *stūpa* ".

One of the donors, himself a member of one or the other of the two cliff-dwelling sects, describes himself in a donatory inscription as belonging to the school of *Cetiyavāda*, the parent school.[41] Again, the fifth-century commentator on the *Kathāvatthu* frequently mentions these two Cliff schools as holding some of the 'heretical' doctrines reviewed in that work and sometimes collectively refers to them as *Andhakas* (Southerners). Thus it seems that the ancient headquarters of the Mahāsanghikas were in the Madhya-bhārata region of India, at Sānchi and around it.

But the Mahāsanghikas had their centres also in the north and the east. In a list of schools inset in a work of the fifth century, A.D., to which Dr. Thomas draws attention, the following divisions among the Mahāsanghikas are noted—*Pūrvaśailas*, *Aparaśailas*, *Haimavatas*, *Lokottaravādins* and *Prajñaptivādins*.[42] Of these the first and the second were of central India; the third, as its name implies, must have been settled in the northern Himalayan region; the fourth, as the descriptive sub-title of the *Mahāvastu* indicates,[43] had its headquarters in 'Madhyadeśa',—perhaps Magadha and its environs where most of the Mahāsanghikas were found by I-tsing (A.D. 671–695).[44]

In the western parts of India too there were Mahāsanghika centres where Mahāsanghika monks seem to have enjoyed great esteem and popularity. In the Karle 'cave-temples' of Bombay, a number of donatory inscriptions has been discovered in which the Mahāsanghikas of the locality are mentioned. One records the donation of a village by a king named Śivaskandha Gupta; another, the gift of a nine-celled hall to the 'Bhikkhus of the Four Quarters' for use as property ('*paragahe*') of the Mahāsanghikas.[45]

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[41] JRAS, 1891, footnote (Rhys Davids on *Sects of the Buddhists*).

[42] HBT, p. 38. These five divisions among the Mahāsanghikas became traditional and are listed also by Vinītadeva. See Buston, p. 199.

[43] See *infra*, p. 145.

[44] Takakasu, Intro., p. XXIII.

[45] See Ep. Ind., Vol. VII, pp. 64 ff (No. 19, Plate II) and pp. 71 ff (No. 20, Plate iii). In the first, a village named Karajaka is donated as 'monks' land' to the corporation (*nikāya*) of the Bhikkhus of the Mahāsanghika school; in the second, a lay devotee named Harapharana donates a 'nine-celled hall'.

The part played by the Mahāsanghika School in the history of Buddhist development is nearly impossible now to reconstruct. Only a fragment from the canon of one of its sub-sects survives,—the *Mahāvastu*; other fragments lie unexplored in Chinese versions; the tradition of its origin is hopelessly confused, though the existence of its centres all over India is indicated by localised archæological finds.

Of the other schools and their sects, the names are all that survive.

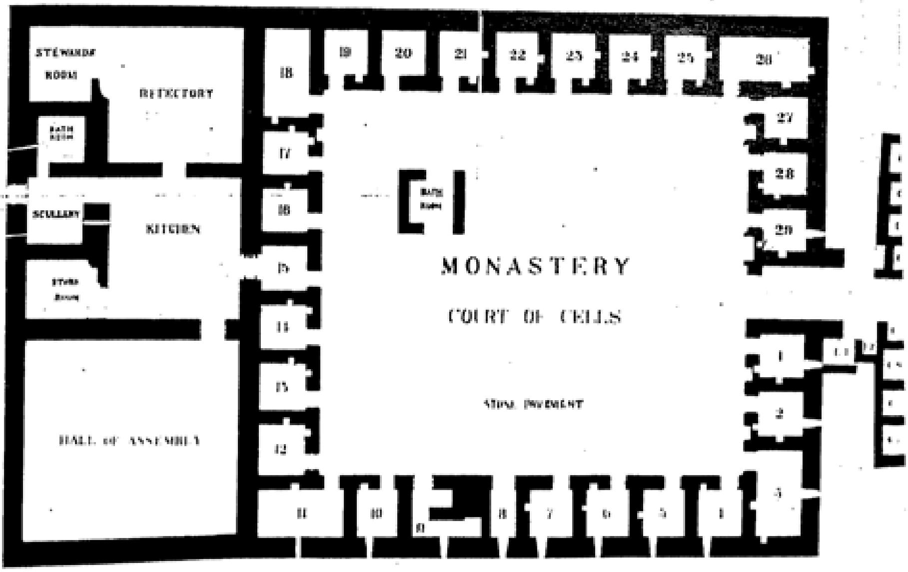
The formation of a School, as we have seen, would be preceded by a Schism and a schism would necessitate the migration of the schismatic party to a different *āvāsa*. It was enjoined by the revised *Vinaya* rule,[46] founded on the principle of integrity (*samaggatā*) of each congregational unit (*sangha*). So a Buddhist school derives its denomination from any of the three sources,—the domicile, the credo and the name of the first propounder of the dissident doctrine. The credo name, however, is a sort of nickname, not necessarily standing for the central creed of the school. With the occurrence of further schisms within a school, the centres of the parent body would tend to multiply.

For monks of the same school, it was both law and custom to reside together, and the Chinese pilgrims, long centuries afterwards, observed and noted this practice established by age-long usage. 'A *Sanghārāma* (communal monastery) belonging to the Mahāsanghika school', 'a *Sanghārāma* where the Hīnayānists live,'—it is thus that Hsüan-tsang usually refers to the monasteries visited by him. But some great monasteries of his time had developed into universities like the Mahāvihāra at Nālandā, and they were common resorts of learners and teachers of different schools and sects.

Scattered works of some of the sects or schools are found in Chinese or Tibetan versions and three treatises of three different ages exist in translations on their doctrinal differences.

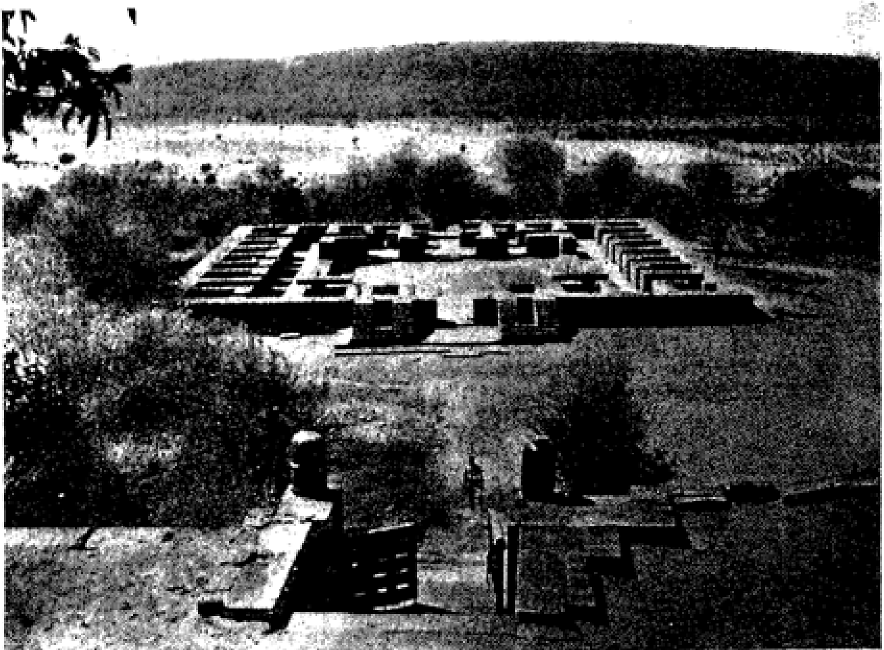
But the treatises are of little help in reconstructing the *vādas*. Their sources of information are unknown and, even if the doctrine has been correctly assigned to the school, its place in the development of the school, as well as in its system, cannot be ascertained. Only the ancient author of the

[46] See *supra*, pp. 125–126.



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

GROUNDPLAN OF A DEVELOPED SANGHĀRĀMA



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

GROUNDWORK OF A RUINED MONASTERY
UNEARTHED AT SANCHI



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

ASOKA AS CONCEIVED IN SCULPTURE

(From a Sanchi Tope panel. This is the only available representation of Asoka in ancient sculpture. The Emperor is seen on the right alighting from a kneeling elephant to offer worship to the Bodhi Tree with due pomp and ceremony)

commentary on the *Kathāvatthu* vouchsafes now and then a passing spot of light on the time-relation of a scholastic doctrine. He gives fitfully slight casual indication, as the others never do, of personal knowledge. "Only by one word", says Mrs. Rhys Davids, "does he here and there infuse life into his dissentient dummies:—the word, *etarhi*, 'at the present day, now'. Of some of the contested points, he writes, 'held now (or 'at present') by M or N".[47]

Inset in miscellaneous undated Buddhist works, there are traditional lists of schools and sects, each school supposed to have had its own canon. How many canonical recensions were made in the course of Buddhist history and each with what degree of completeness is a question asked in vain.

But different recensions there were. At first they existed in *saṅgītis*, periodical rehearsals and recitations held by the resident monks of a school in their own *āvāsa*. But by the first century, B.C. or A.D., writing came into use and texts in manuscript became available. Pilgrims from China and in a later age from Tibet took away to their home-lands huge quantities of them and preserved many of the texts in free translation. Fa-hsien, Hsüan-tsang and I-tsing were all assiduous translators of Indian texts into Chinese. Within the borders of India herself, they perished utterly with the ruin, through violence or time's decay, of the great Buddhist monastic establishments. Original fragments of Buddhist works discovered in India are extraordinarily scanty.

In Nanjio's *Catalogue of the Chinese Tripiṭaka*, there are a few translations of Mahāsanghika works. Some were done into Chinese by Fa-hsien and Buddhagupta in collaboration. There are two *Vinaya* works of the Mahāsanghikas and one *sūtra*, with an earlier and a later translation, differently entitled.[48] There is a larger number of works of the Mūla-sarvāstivāda and Sarvāstivāda schools, specially of the *Vinaya* category.[49] None of the Indian texts in Tibetan

[47] P. of C., p. XXXIII.

[48] 'Sanghati-sūtra-dharmaparyāya' (No. 449) and 'Buddha-bhāṣita-mahāsaṅgīti-saddharma-sūtra' (No. 972).

[49] No. 1110, which is the *Prātimokṣa* of the Mūla-sarvāstivādins; No. 1115; which is a Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*; No. 1118 which is a Mūla-sarvāstivāda *vinaya*; No. 1160 which is the *Prātimokṣa* of the Sarvāstivādins; No. 1161, do for the nuns, etc.

translation goes back beyond the fifth or fourth century, A.D.

In each *vāda* there must have been a point of integration: it was its Buddha-concept. Each school, it seems, had a version of the Lord's life, in tune with its approved Buddhology.

There is extant in both Chinese and Tibetan a complete legend on the life of the Buddha, of which the reconstructed title is 'The Tale of the Renunciation' (*Abhiniṣkramaṇa Sūtra*.[50] It is a late work, but at the end of this *sūtra*, the author mentions five other versions of the Buddha-life made by five different schools, viz., (i) *Mahāvastu* by the Mahāsanghikas, (ii) *Lalitavistara* by the Sarvāstivādins, (iii) *Avadāna* by the Kāśyapīyas, (iv) *Buddhacarita* by the Dharmaguptas, and (v) *Vinayapiṭaka-mūla* by the Mahīśāsakas.[51] Of these (i) and (ii) are available in the original, and (iv) may or may not be the same as the well-known Sanskrit epic by Aśvaghoṣa.

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'Dummies', Mrs. Rhys Davids calls the Buddhist non-Theravāda schools, and the treatises of Bhavya, Vasumitra and Vinītadeva offer us only the dry disintegrated bones of doctrine.[52] Yet the dummies were once alive and the dry bones clothed with flesh and blood. In a community of monks, the spirit of individualism, instilled into the faith by the Lord himself in his great speech to Ananda at Beluva, would assert itself now and then, calling in question and putting to the proof some point or points of doctrine or practice; a party would be formed; then would come the movement of schism and secession, and so a new centre of development would grow up, with a new recension of the canon.

'Out of this school, so many schools arose',—in a general and abstract statement like this the author of the *Dīpavaṁsa* manages to suppress all the movement of life, all the eager stir and ferment of thought, all the poignant questionings and heart-searchings of men, from the first enunciation of a dissident doctrine by somebody at an *āvāsa* to the making of the canonical recension and the acquirement of a new domicile

[50] Nanjio, No. 680.

[51] Nanjio, under No. 680 (Column, 161).

[52] See Rockhill for a brief summary in Ch. VI (*History of the Buddhist Schools*). Also translation of Hsüan-tsang's version of Vasumitra's work in Vols. I and II of *Journal C.U.* (1920).

and a new name by a sect or school. We are told by the author of the *Dīpavaṁsa* that, including the orthodox Theravāda, there were eighteen schools.[53] He ignores of course the Mahāyāna developments in progress in the mainland of India in his time. Yet these eighteen schools represent eighteen movements 'within the *sāsana*', of which all history is lost.

The development of Buddhist thought was carried on by these schools, and the proliferation of sects and schools during the first two centuries after the Lord's decease was a process that went on through all the after-centuries of Buddhism so long as it was a living religion in India. But at a certain stage, sectarianism must have lost its ancient keenness. Only four principal schools, viz., the Theravāda, the Mahāsanghika, the Mūla-sarvāstivāda and the Sammitīya, with eighteen[54] sub-divisions in all among them, were noticed by I-tsing. But adherence to a sect had then become a matter of intellectual preference: we are told by Paramārtha (A.D. 499–569), the biographer of Vasubandhu, that it was creditable for a monk to be versed in the scriptures of all schools.[55]

APPENDIX TO IX

On 'Holy personages' and 'Common folk' in Hsüan-tsang's account of the Origin of the Mahāsanghika School.

The rise of the Mahāsanghika School in consequence of a movement directed against the 'monasticizing' of the Lord's *dhamma-vinaya* by the Theras is strongly suggested by the tradition of its origin as recorded by Hsüan-tsang. It is necessary, therefore, to understand precisely what Hsüan-tsang meant by saying that the Mahāsanghika scriptures

[53] 5, 51—'Sattarasa bhinnavādā eko vādo abhinnako sabbev' aṭṭhārasa honti 'bhinnavādena te sahā'.

[54] The number looks suspicious and may not be the actual, but only the old traditional count. Takakasu, pp. xxiii–xxiv.

[55] Paramārtha, a native of Ujjain (India), arrived at Nanking (China) in 548. Many works, both original and translation into Chinese, are ascribed to him. He wrote a *Life of Vasubandhu* in Chinese. The statement cited occurs in it. See the reference in Eliot, Vol. I, p. 260, footnote 3.

were settled by both ' holy personages ' and ' common folk '. The former almost certainly means the Arhats, but does the latter expression mean ' ordinary monks ' or ' lay people ' ? Beal's translation is ' common folk ' : Watters's ' common brethren '.[56]

I have consulted the original Chinese passage in the *Si-yu-ki* with the aid of a Chinese scholar who supplied me with a copy.[57] ' Holy personage ' stands for Chinese '*Sheng*' and ' common folk ' (Beal) or ' common brethren ' (Watters) for '*Fan*'.

The term '*Fan*' is not used in Chinese for one ordained, for whom the Chinese word is '*Sheng*', most probably meaning ' one who belongs to a *sangha* ', a monk, a priest.

The Chinese word for ' common monk ' (*Fan-sheng*), as distinguished from Arhats, occurs in a passage in the *Si-yu-ki* in which the author describes the old glories of Dhanakaṭaka where " during the millennium immediately following the Buddha's decease, a thousand ordinary brethren (i.e., common monks) used to come and spend the *vassa* at the end of which everyone became an Arhat and went back through the air ". On this passage, Watters's comment is as follows : " Here, as in many other passages, the ' fan-fu-sengh ' or ' holy monk ' is clearly distinguished from the ' Shen-sheng ' or the ' Holy Monk ' who has attained Arhatship, and the *Fang-chih* uses the recognized contraction, ' fan-sheng ' ".[58] '*Fan*' stands for ' commonalty ': it is not the same as ' fan-sheng.'

It is thus certain that Beal's translation of '*Fan*' as ' common folk ' is the correct one, and not Watters's translation as ' common brethren '. The tradition recorded by Hsüan-tsang is that not only the Arhat leaders of the *Sangha*, but ordinary *lay people* also had a hand in settling the scriptures of the Mahāsanghikas. The Theravāda scriptures were settled by the Arhats alone.[59]

[56] Watters, Vol. II, p. 160.
[57] The copy consulted by me is one published in 1909 by the authorities of the Tien-nin-Temple of Changchow in the Kiangsu Province of China.
[58] Watters, Vol. II, pp. 219–220.
[59] See *infra*, p. 142, footnote 3.

PART III

BUDDHISM OF THE ASOKAN AGE
Circa 279—50 B.C.

X

BUDDHISM—MONKISH AND POPULAR

IT WILL perhaps be convenient in connecting up with later developments of Buddhism in the following age to recapitulate the main features of the religion as it emerged from its early formative stage.

Born in the Lord's open teachings, Buddhism, as we have seen, had its nursery in the monks' *āvāsas*. Its earliest scripture in the framework of legends, the primitive Buddha-cult and its doctrines, the *Abhidhamma* philosophy, the sects and schools,—were all outgrowths of monastic life and culture. The initial tradition of the religion was therefore a monkish one.

We have seen also how the monks made the *Dhamma-vinaya* of the Lord appear as a religion for monkhood,—inconsistently, however, with the concept of the Lord and the character of his teachings as described and inculcated in the scripture itself. While in one aspect the Lord was *Satthā* to his sect in the wanderers' community, he was at the same time conceived more sublimely as the *Sammā-saṁbuddha* (' Teacher Buddha ') whose teachings were not for a sect or a school, but for all mankind, given ' with no closed fist ' and ' shining only in the open like the sun and the moon '.[1] This universal character of the Lord's teachings hardly accorded with the claim of the monk-made scripture, viz. that it contained all his teachings ' without addition or omission'[2] that it was the definitive canon of Buddhism.

To the scripture made by the *Theras*,—the Arhat monks who are reported to have met at Rājagaha shortly after the Lord's decease,[3]—the challenge came from the Mahāsanghika

[1] See *supra*, p. 93.

[2] Dpv., 5, 52—in which the Theravāda canon is said to represent the *sāsana* of the Lord (Jina) ' without omission or addition '.

[3] Dpv., 5, 6–10: "At this council (held by Kassapa in the Sattapaṇṇa cave at Rājagaha) were many Bhikkhus who were original depositories of the Faith,—Kassapa, Ānanda, Upāli, Anuruddha, Vangsisa, Kumāra-kassapa, Kaccāna, Kotthika and others. By these and other saintly Theras to the number of five hundred was the collection of the Dhamma and the Vinaya made. Because it was collected by the Theras, it is called Theravāda ".

schismatics. How could the scripture, they contended, be complete and definitive when it was made up by monks alone? Outside the system of religion which the *Theras* had fashioned out of the Lord's teachings, there might be traditions of them cherished by unlearned unordained Buddhists. The Mahāsanghika attempt was to recover and restore these traditions and construct a more liberal and more authentic canon by collaboration of both Arhats and lay men. So much indeed is perfectly clear from Hsüan Tsang's account of the 'Great Schism', drawn apparently from some Mahāsanghika source.

We are thus put on the track of a 'popular Buddhism', existing side by side with the 'monkish',—not based on the monk-made scripture, not encased perhaps in cult, doctrines and dogmas nor cast into formularies and categories, but a Buddhism, more or less fluid and formless and mingled with folk-lore and folk forms of piety.

The Theras' canon, as we have observed, was in fact a selection made out of existing legends of the Lord to expound and illustrate the Buddha-cult held by them: it was in the nature of a palimsest with the underwritings scored off. What appears on the surface does not let us see what lay beneath its formalism, categories and doctrines,—the 'living religion' that dwelt in folk mind and popular conception.

This 'popular Buddhism', being the religion of the unlearned, has no scripture or literary record, nor does it come into our ken until in the next age when it found for itself a symbol and a mode of expression. This was the worship of the *Stūpa*. From their mounds and sculptured stones, these *stūpas* speak silently to us across the centuries of the 'popular', as distinguished from the 'monkish' Buddhism of the age.

* * * * *

It was a 'way' of Dhamma which lay Buddhists had struck out apart from monkish lead.

The canon that the *Thera* monks had made put all its emphasis on showing that the *Dhamma-vinaya* was the 'way' (*magga*) for monks only.

Its goal was defined as Arhatship. The Arhat was a monk who had reached a state of spiritual consummation by grades

defined as three in technical terms of doctrine.[4] Though the canon gives a list of 21 lay men who became Arhats,[5] the Theravāda, silently by-passing it, bans as heresy the opinion that a lay man can attain to that position.[6] The Theravāda *Vinaya* was so fashioned as to be for the practice of monks only, and householders were only *upāsakas* (devotees) from whom all the higher ethics, the special graded system of spiritual culture, and the ultimate reward of Arhatship were barred. For them the higher path, termed *Brahmacariya*, was believed to be not easy, nay almost impossible to tread.[7] The topics of discourse to them are therefore strictly limited in the canon.[8] In nearly all sections of the *Suttapiṭaka*, an addendum is included under the caption, *Gahapati-vagga* (Section for Householders), setting forth in the usual legendary form only the ethical ideals most suitable for householders. From the Theravāda standpoint, it is easy enough to take the view, as was done by Kern[9] and an older generation of Buddhistic scholars who based their idea of Buddhism solely on the canon of that school, that Buddhism is properly a religion of monkhood and that the laity is but accessory.

But the hierartic exclusiveness of the Theravāda was not the whole story: it was challenged by the Mahāsanghikas who would not admit the perfections claimed for the Arhats,[10] who held that even a lay man could be an Arhat,[11] and who allowed lay people to have a hand in the making of scripture.

At the bottom of much of the volume of dissidence and dissent from the Theravāda, a case of Monk *versus* Lay Man seems indicated.

We are told by the author of the *Dīpavaṁsa* that the Mahāsanghikas had 'another *sutta* and another *vinaya*'.[12] The

[4] The technical names for these grades are: (i) *Sotāpatti* (entering the 'stream'), (ii) *Sakadāgāmi* (the condition in which there can be one 'return' only), (iii) *Anāgāmi* (the condition in which there can be no 'return'), and (iv) *Arhattā* (the consummate condition of an Arhat).

[5] See Dial, iii, p. 5 footnote and D–PTS under *Arhat*.

[6] See Kv, ii, 1.

[7] The typical passage on this point occurs in the Sutta describing the 'fruits' of a Samaṇa's life (Sāmañña-phala Sutta, DN, Vol. I, p. 63—Saṁbādho gharāvāso rajo-patho, etc.). Cf. MN, II, p. 55, and several other passages in the canon to the same effect.

[8] AN, iv, p. 209 (Topics of instruction to Householders).

[9] *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, p. 72.

[10] See *supra*, pp. 130–131.

[11] This 'heresy', attributed to the Mahāsanghikas, is condemned in the *Kathāvatthu*.

[12] *Supra*, pp. 127–128.

question arises—what made the fundamental distinction of the Mahāsanghika *vinaya* ?

The division between the *Dhamma* and the *Vinaya* was traditional, and Mahāsanghikas also had their own *vinaya*. Fa-hsien took away from India, early in the fifth century A.D., some *Vinaya* literature of the Mahāsanghika school[13] which he translated later into Chinese.[14] These Mahāsanghika *Vinaya* works deserve to be explored to find out what the attitude of the school towards *Vinaya* was,—whether in these works any distinction appears between the Theravāda legalism which deemed *Vinaya* as laws of the Order only, and the liberalism which took *Vinaya* as just a different way of life to be trod by the ordained, striving towards a higher spiritual goal.

There survives, however, a great original Mahāsanghika work which suggests the existence of 'another Vinaya' of the Mahāsanghikas. A reference to this work has been made in the last chapter.

It is the *Mahāvastu* ('The Great Story'), solitary remnant of a canonical rescension made by a Mahāsanghika sect called the *Lokottaravādins* (Supra-mundanists) of Madhyadeśa (Middle Country,—Magadha ?). It is part of a compendium, and is introduced as the 'First Work of the *Vinayapiṭaka* of the Great Story'.[15] Evidently it was a *Vinaya* work in the canon of this sect.

This *Vinayapiṭaka* fragment (in hybrid Sanskrit) of the *Lokottaravādins* compares strangely with the *Vinayapiṭaka* of the Theravāda (Pali) canon.

The latter is clear enough in its purport and contents. It leads up, through a sequence of legends, from the Lord's Enlightenment to the foundation of the Order. This, however, is only prefatory. Substantially the work is a complete collection of rules and regulations of the Order supposed to have been laid down by the Lord on different occasions,

[13] See Legge, Ch. XXXVI, p. 98; Takakasu, p. XX.

[14] Nanjio, No. 1119 (*Mahāsangha-vinaya* which exists also in Tibetan), No. 1159 (which is an extract from the former). The first was translated by Buddhabhadra in collaboration with Fa-hsien about A.D. 416 and is in eighteen sections (Nanjio, column 247). There is also a Vinaya work for the nuns translated by Buddhabhadra and Fa-hsien, No. 1150.

[15] Mhu, i, p. 2: 'Ārya-Mahāsanghikānāṁ Lokottaravādinaṁ madhy-deśikānām pathena Vinayapiṭakasya Mahāvastuye ādi'.

arranged and systematized, comprising a complete body of monastic laws.

On the other hand, in the *Mahāvastu*, though the legend of the foundation of the Order is included as one of the episodes of the 'Great Story' (Mahāvastu), it stands by itself, and the legends of the Lord promulgating the laws of the Order do not follow as in the Theravāda *Vinayapiṭaka*. Between the *Vinayapiṭaka* and the *Mahāvastu*, there is much common ground,[16] but the outstanding divergence lies in the elimination of the legends of 'law-making' from the latter. Though professedly a *Vinaya* work, 'Vinaya' *in the Theravāda sense* is conspicuous by its absence from the *Mahāvastu*: it is therefore no *Vinaya* work at all from the Theravāda standpoint.

Those outside the pale of *Vinaya*,—the lay men professing only the Three-Refuge creed,—were no more than on the fringe of the religion, according to the Theravāda. Yet other schools seem to have recognized them, allowed them initiatives in matters of *Dhamma*, and perhaps were even influenced by their mentality,—for, judging from surviving fragments of their scriptures, they appear to have interwoven with the faith forms of thought and modes of feeling of an essentially *lay* character. It was not out of the training and mental discipline of the monks that the stupendous miraculous events, the docetic glorifications of the Lord, the upsurge of Bhakti, etc. emanated. They reflect a popular, as distinguished from clerical, element in the religion. The Theravāda rejects it; many other schools do not. But for pious minds its attraction is so irresistible that it makes inroads even on the Theravāda canon in its latest books.[17]

* * * * *

In conceiving of 'popular Buddhism', one must realise that the folk mind and the monk mind had not the same approach to the religion. In the monks' *āvāsas* the tradition was to take the *Dhamma* through its *Abhidhamma* interpretation. *Abhidhamma*, as we have seen,[18] was a kind of exegetic philosophy, explicating doctrinal concepts out of the legends and discourses. "Terms and formulæ were taken out of

[16] See Note on the *Mahāvastu* in Law's *A Study of the Mahāvastu*, p. 4.
[17] See *infra*, pp. 201–202.
[18] See *infra*, pp. 115 ff.

that setting of occasion and of discourse in which we meet them enshrined in the *Nikāyas*".[19] They were put into aggregates or categories. In the *āvāsas* it was an industry traditional and time-honoured: the first work in the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* of the Pali canon, *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, dates back, in the opinion of Mrs. Rhys Davids, to the 4th century, B.C.[20] "The tradition is not so far wrong", says she, "when it tells us that commentaries on all the principal canonical books were handed down in schools of the Order along with the texts themselves".[21] The *Dhamma* was thus made to appear through the *Abhidhamma* medium in the training of a monk.

Abhidhamma was the monk's special culture,—the peculiar product of the intellectual and academic atmosphere of the *āvāsas*. It served really to reduce all the vivid, concrete contents of the legends to formalism and abstraction, planting a *hortus siccus* in the place of a garden. The monk-mind and the lay mind would naturally take different attitudes over the question—wherein lay the true *dhamma*-content of a legend, in the doctrine or rule it contains, or in the true word and living picture of the Lord it holds?

It was not exactly in the substance of faith, but in view-point and attitude, that there was divergence. The scripture of the monks and of the lay men was the same, but its legends were not understood in the same sense nor interpreted in the same light. The difference is concretely illustrated in *Stūpa*-worship, as we shall observe later, by the divergent views taken of it by the monk and the lay man respectively.[22]

Only chance glimpses, where the monk-made records happen to refer to schisms or heresies or dissension in the *sangha* over a point of doctrine, make us aware of the existence of a Buddhism of a different complexion and different temper side by side with the Buddhism formulated by monks. But this popular Buddhism, with its symbols and its characteristic expression, comes into our ken an age later, only when the illustrious figure of Emperor Asoka (269–236 B.C.) rises like sun-rise on the horizon of Indian history.

* * * * *

[19] DS, pp. XXI–XXXII.
[20] DS, p. XXV.
[21] *Ibid.*, XXVI.
[22] See *supra*, pp. 169–170

When Asoka came to inherit the throne of the Mauryas, Buddhism was already an old and developed faith: it had gone through more than two centuries of development; the monastic community had become a distinct organization in the State; out of its limited original sphere, Buddhism had spread, side by side with other faiths, widely over his vast empire; it was certainly a well-established *religion of the people*.

From his edicts we know that Emperor Asoka embraced the Buddhist faith. His conversion to Buddhism is compared by Rhys Davids with the Roman emperor Constantine's to Christianity, and it is implied that Buddhism must have been the predominant religion in his empire.[23] This view is not historically provable. But whether there was an urge of conviction or a policy of State behind his adoption of Buddhism, the figure of Asoka is so lovingly depicted and so affectionately enshrined in Buddhist legends that one would fain approach it a little intimately,—through some personal token, were it possible.

How was the Buddhist emperor regarded *personally* by his subject peoples among whom, as we know from his edicts, diverse creeds and faiths prevailed?

We may leave on one side the partisan Buddhist legends, but there is an intriguing suggestion in the term, *Piyadassi* (Handsome), applied to him. In many of his edicts, he adds this word to his imperial Maurya title, *Devānam-piya* (Beloved of the Gods). 'Handsome' is not known to be a title or an honorific or a name.—Was it then an endearing epithet bestowed by his subjects on him?

Long centuries after the Emperor was gathered to his fathers, the little epithet clung in popular tradition to his name. The author of the *Dīpavaṁsa*, who was a Ceylonese monk and had probably never seen and, even if he had done so, could never have deciphered any of the edicts of Asoka and borrowed the epithet from there, applies it at least twice to the emperor in his account of him.[24]

[23] *Buddhist India*, p. 298.

[24] Dpv., 6, 1–2 'De satāni ca vassāni aṭṭhārasa vassāni ca Saṁbuddhe parinibbute abhisitto Piyadsassana Āgata rājaiddhiyo abhisitte Piyadassane Pharati puññatejañ ca uddhamadho ca yojanaṁ Jambudīpe maharājje balacakke pavattati.'

Ibid., 6, 14—'Pūjesi rattamālehi Piyadassi mahāyaso'.

It opens an interesting side-line of speculation: one wonders whether 'handsomeness' ran in the imperial line of the Mauryas, founded by Chandragupta. When Chandragupta himself had been dead for centuries and his name become a legend, a Sanskrit dramatist, Viśākhadatta[25] wrote a drama of political intrigue entitled *Mudrā-rākṣasam*, taking Chandragupta as one of the main characters. The dramatist plays again and again on his name *Candra* (Moon) and describes him in a passage as 'a Moon in people's sight'.[26] Well might his moon-like grace have been part of the traditions about Chandragupta, explored by the dramatist.

Was it inherited, one is tempted to ask, by his more illustrious grandson? It seems that in the Asokan traditions too handsomeness of the 'moon-like' variety clung to the emperor as a distinction.

After the fall of the Maurya dynasty, when the Śuṅga kings were on the Magadhan throne, the palmy days of Buddhism under Asoka's reign were remembered. Asoka's love for the Bodhi Tree became a legend. A literary version of it is found in the *Divyāvadāna*[27] and a sculptured one in a panel inset in the front face of the eastern gate of the Sānchi Tope.[28]

The royal figure of Asoka, as the engraver conventionally conceived it, appears. He is alighting from a kneeling elephant, and even in the stylization of the figure, one becomes subtly aware of the artist's attempt, crude as it is, to infuse into the pose a soft, rather effeminate ('moon-like') grace. Perhaps it was reminiscent of the 'Piyadassi' tradition.

[25] On *Viśākhadatta*, see S. K. De's article contributed to *B.C. Law Volume*, Part I, Indian Research Institute, Calcutta, 1945.

[26] Act VI: 'Janadṛṣticandramā Candraguptaḥ'.

[27] Div., pp. 397–398.

[28] See Plate X (2) in BBA.

XI

THE HANDSOME KING, BELOVED OF THE GODS

ROUND THE life and personality of this Handsome King, a large body of legends has accreted. They are recorded in the two ancient chronicles of Ceylon (*Dīpavaṁsa* and *Mahāvaṁsa*), in Buddhaghosa's commentaries on the Theravāda canon (e.g., *Samantapāsādikā*), in the ancient legend-collection, *Divyāvadāna* (XXVI–XXIX), and in a Tibetan historiographical work comparatively modern (Tārānātha's 'History of Buddhism' in Tibetan, completed in 1608). We shall presently see how these legends attempt to transfigure him. But from the mists of legends, the Handsome King steps out into the light of sober history almost by an accident,—his happening to copy a practice of the Achæmenidon kings of Iran.

In Asoka's imperial court, there seems to have been a marked strain of Iranian influence. At least one of the provincial governors under him was an Iranian. His name was Tuṣāspha, Governor of Girnār. Though referred to in the Pali legends as a *Yavana* (Greek), his name is decidedly not Greek, but Iranian.[1]

The architects of Asoka's court also seem to have been Iranian or trained by Iranian masters,—those who fashioned in the style of Iran the Persepolitan capitals with animal figures on the finely polished monoliths set up by the emperor at several centres in his territories.

We may imagine that at a certain stage of his imperial career, Asoka felt an urge to come closer to his people and establish with them a more natural, a more human contact, —to take them into his confidence and tell them what he himself thought and felt and wished them to be or to do. To put this into effect, the only means of 'broadcasting'

[1] See Hultzsch, pp. XI and XLII. Prof. Rai Chaudhury thinks (*contra* Vincent Smith) that he was a Greek (PHI, pp. 259–260).

available in that age was that devised and adopted by ancient Iranian kings like Darius. Or who can tell that the suggestion did not actually come from the Iranian Governor of Girnār?

So at widely separated spots of his far-flung empire, he had edicts and rescripts inscribed on rocks or monoliths, and he employed for this purpose a staff of inscription-writers (*lipikāras*) among whom also there were men of Iran. The population of India, since the dawn of her history, has never been homogeneous in race or culture, and the inscriptions for the sake of intelligibility in different parts had to be in slightly different dialects and in two several scripts, called *Kharoṣṭhī* and *Brāhmī*, of which the former was of Iranian origin.[2] Curious little slips are made by the Iranian inscribers in handling the Sanskritic dialects of Northern India,—the Iranian form '*Dipi*' is put in place of the Sanskrit form '*Lipi*' (writing) and the Iranian word '*Nipista*' for Sanskrit '*Likhita*' (written).[3] Not only is there evidence of Iranian hand in the inscriptions, but also of direct Iranian imitation in the style of some of the edicts in which the phrase, 'The King speaks thus', seems reminiscent of the formula used by Darius in his Behistun rock-edict: 'Says Darius the King'.[4]

'*The King who speaks thus*' in the edicts is known in the legends as Asoka, but he is self-styled (except in two inscriptions where the name appears along with the title[5]) by the Maurya imperial title, 'Beloved of the Gods' (*Devānaṁ-piya*). And in most instances the epithet 'Handsome' (*Piyadassi*) is tacked on to it.

Asoka in some of his edicts refers to his predecessors on the throne as '*Devānam-piyas*'.[6] It was probably optional to add to this imperial title a personal one. Asoka's father Bindusāra, as we know from Greek sources, had a personal title, 'Killer of Foes' (Amitraghāta—Greek *Amitrochades*).[7]

[2] *Kharoṣṭhī* is a descriptive name, meaning 'like an ass's lips'. See Konow, pp. XIV–XV. Also S–E. Dict., Intro., p. XXV.

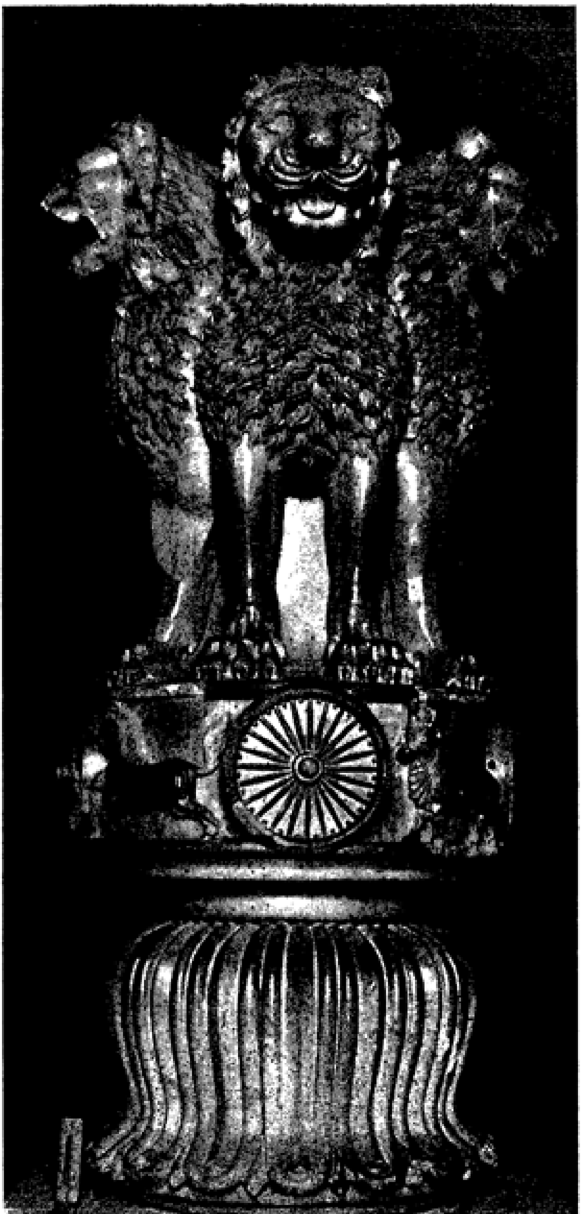
[3] Hultzsch, p. XL, ii.

[4] See ERE under *Behistun* where the text is given in translation.

[5] Māski Edict., discovered in 1915. Also in the edict, not yet officially edited, discovered at Gujjara in the Datia District of the Vindya-pradesh in December, 1954. The edict is introduced with the words: 'Devānam-piyasa Piyadasina Asoka Rājena'.

[6] Kālsi Rock Edict, VIII and elsewhere.

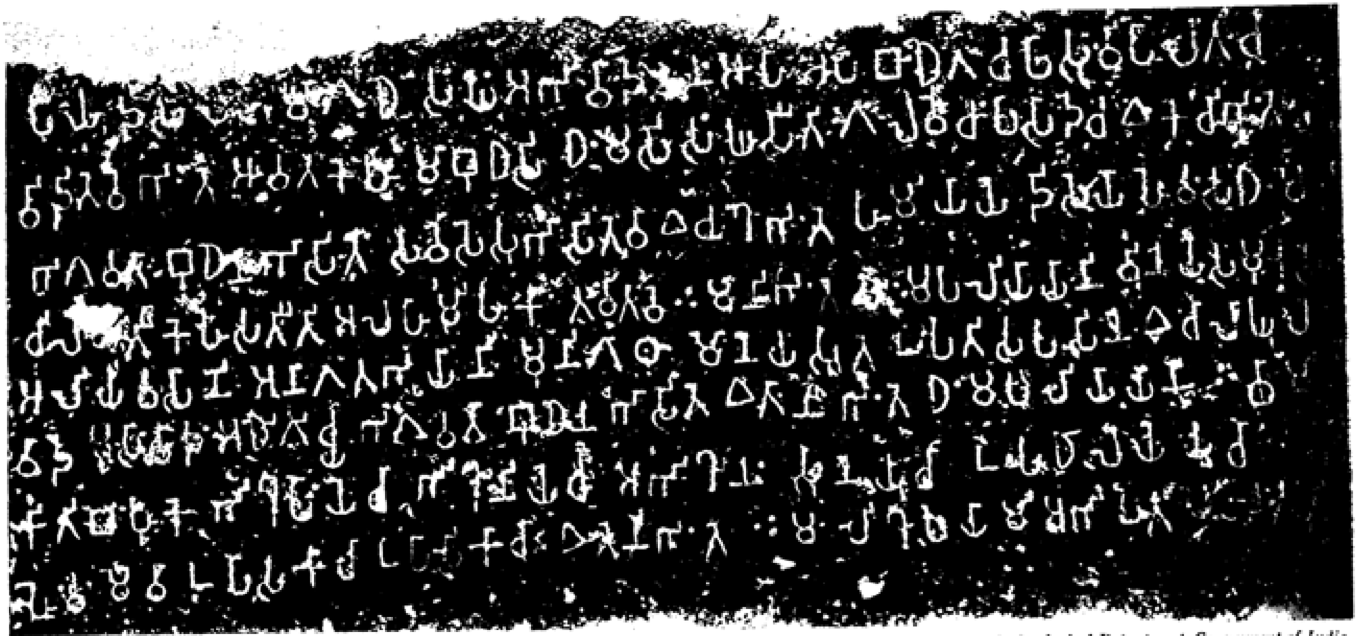
[7] See Hultzsch, p. XXXIV.



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

THE ASOKAN LION-CAPITAL AT SARNATH:
NOW A STATE-EMBLEM OF INDIA

Text page 154



Courtesy : Archaeological Department, Government of India

Asoka's Edict to the Monks

(The Calcutta-Bairat Rock Edict)

Asoka took the more genial and popular title of 'Handsome' (*Piyadassi*). Even after the extinction of this dynasty, founded by the adventurous genius from central India, Chandragupta Maurya (Chandragupta 'of the Peacock',—perhaps the totem of the clan he was born in) on the wreckage left by Alexander's abortive invasion of India, the grand old imperial titles of the Maurya emperors were remembered. In the court of Puṣyamitra, who swept away the Maurya dynasty from the Magadhan throne in the latter half of the 2nd century, B.C., lived the great Sanskrit grammarian Pātañjali. In illustrating grammatical rules he has a knack of citing expressions current or well-known in the country. Both 'Beloved of the Gods' and 'Killer of Foes' are cited by him.[8] Some of the kings of Ceylon also adopted the Magadhan imperial title of 'Beloved of the Gods' made illustrious by the Maurya emperors.[9] But by a curious irony of fate, which overtakes words and phrases in the history of language, '*Beloved of the Gods*' degenerated in meaning, like the English word '*Silly*', and came to mean a fool, an idiot.[10]

* * * * *

The difference, however, is remarkable between the Devānaṁpiya of the edicts and Asoka, also called Dhammāsoka, of the Buddhist legends!

The legends make him an active patron of the *Sangha*, especially of the Theravāda,—the edicts show him mostly concerned with laity; the former speak of a great and famous 'Council' of monks held under his ægis at the imperial capital, Pāṭaliputra, in order to purge and purify the *Sangha*, which is said to have resulted in expulsion of sixty thousand heretics,—the latter, while mentioning *seriatim* the measures taken by the emperor for the promotion of Dhamma, make no allusion to this 'council' at all; the former represent him as having become a monk in his old age,—the latter speak only of his paying visits to the *Sangha*[11]; and lastly, the former describe him before his conversion as being a man of

[8] Pat. on Pān. II, 4, 56; V, 3, 14; VI, 3, 10. Patañjali says that the word 'Devānāmpriya' is used as an honorific like *Bhavān*, *Dīrghāyus* and *Āyuṣmān*. '*Amitraghāta*' is cited in Pat. on Pān., III, 2, 97.

[9] See DPP, Vol. I, p. 219, footnote 26.

[10] See S-E. Dict. under *Devānāmpriya*.

ferocious nature ('*Caṇḍāsoka*'), the latter contain no such suggestion, though betraying perhaps a touch of sternness in his nature. But it is not exactly in the tradition of *Caṇḍāsoka* (Ferocious Asoka), but betraying only a determination and decision of character, bordering, it may be, on sternness, e.g., his absolute prohibition of blood-sacrifices which Brāhmaṇical religious ritual required, his ban on popular *samāja* festivals (perhaps because they had a licentious side) and his promulgation of the old *Vinaya* law relating to the expulsion of schismatics from the *Sangha*.

The edicts he broadcast have a constitutional background. They are not exactly 'laws' promulgated by a sovereign to his subjects: they could not have been so without violating constitutional tradition and practice. In all the *earlier* traditions of ancient Indian political theory, a king is nowhere regarded as the source of law, and law-making does not pertain to his functions. Constitutionally, he is to administer and enforce the laws that exist by settled convention or long custom, of which function the symbol is the royal sceptre (*daṇḍa*).[12] The edicts of Asoka are in line with this tradition. They are not issued as commands, except (i) when an edict relates to a law already existing, as the 'law of schisms' in the Buddhist *Vinaya*, or (ii) when an edict is in the nature of an ordinance applicable to a locality, such as the prohibition of animal-slaughter at Pāṭaliputra.[13]

The edicts, except a few which are purely declaratory or commemorative, are both in form and in substance recommendations or exhortations to the Emperor's subjects and are of course coloured perceptibly by the Emperor's own

11 Asoka's contact with the *sangha* is referred to in several inscriptions, e.g., Rupnāth, [Sāsārām, Māski, Brahmagiri and Calcutta-Bairat. The word used is *Upeta* (having come). It cannot be cognate with the verb-form of *Upasampadā* (Ordination as a monk). The legendary stories of Asoka's becoming a monk are supported only by the hardly credible statement of I-tsing, nearly nine centuries after Asoka's time, that he saw an image of Asoka in monk's robes (Takakasu, p. 73).

12 *Daṇḍa* in relation to Rājadharma (the king's duties and functions) is used in the sense of the king's power to enforce laws. It is considered to be the essential attribute of sovereignty, as in *Arthaśāstra*, p. 9: 'Caturvarṇāśramo loko rājñā daṇḍena pālitaḥ Svadharmakarmābhirato vartate sveśu vartmasu'.
For other passages, see my book on *Problem of Indian Nationality* (Calcutta University, 1926), p. 156, footnotes, 92 and 93.

13 See *Problem of Indian Nationality*, p. 152, for interpretation of this edict which is an ordinance applicable to a locality.

Buddhist faith. With the hymns of the *Dhammapada*, Asoka seems to have been conversant, and many of his recommendations in respect of *Dhamma* hold reminiscences of verses traceable in the Pali version of that scripture.[14]

But the Dhamma, the cause of which the Emperor professes in the edicts to have espoused himself, bidding his people adopt and follow it, is *not* his own chosen and adopted form of faith and decidedly *not* the *Dhamma* as monks understood it.

* * * * *

Dhamma is a term of ancient origin, which, in both literary and popular usage in India, is used in an almost infinitely kaleidoscopic variety of senses. In the Buddhist Emperor's use of it in his edicts, it was bound to receive a Buddhist tinge. But it is not used synonymously with Buddhism and decidedly does not mean the *Dhamma* defined and postulated in the scripture of Buddhism. The legends assign a monk preceptor, Upagupta or Tissa, as the Emperor's religious guide and preceptor. But if he had taken his Buddhism from monkish teaching, his references to *Dhamma* in the edicts would have stood in the scriptural and clerical connotation of the term.

In one single edict only (Calcutta-Bairat), the term, *Dhamma*, occurs in its approved scriptural connotation of *Buddha-vacana* (' Words of the Buddha ', as set down in the canonical legends)—the *Dhamma* ' of a formulated, fixed-worded kind '[15] as understood and recognized by monks. But that edict is addressed exclusively to the monks of a monastery that the Emperor visited in the tenth year of his reign. He confines himself in the edict in question to what pertains only to the internal life of the monk community. He emphasizes what he deems to be of best profit to the monks: — in the matter of *Vinaya*, the avoidance of schisms and factions, in the matter of *Dhamma*, the study of the most elevating texts of the scripture. The Emperor specifies these texts[16]; they have been partially located in the Pali canon. The

[14] See Hultzsch, pp. i–liv.
[15] *Manual*, p. 312.
[16] Calcutta-Bairat Rock Edict. See discussion in Winternitz, Vol. II, Appendix III.

selection seems to be at haphazard, including none of the major discourses on doctrine (e.g., *Brahmajāla Suttanta*, DN.), nor showing any bias or preference for any particular set of doctrines. The Emperor appears to have been neither well-versed nor keenly interested in them, though, speaking to learned monks, he makes a little show of learning by working into the phraseology of the edict a small quotation from a scriptural passage, viz., 'The Good Dhamma (*Saddhamma*) shall long remain '.[17]

Evidently he was addressing the monks in terms of their own learning and referring in this edict to the *Dhamma* as the monks conceived and held it.

But he drops this monkish, scriptural connotation of the term in all the edicts addressed to people at large. Mrs. Rhys Davids has counted 184 occurrences of it in the edicts, either simply or in compounds, and "since there are only 26 edicts as yet deciphered, this gives on an average 7 times *per* edict in the use of the word ".[18] But nowhere in all these iterations does *Dhamma* stand in association with the specific values attached to it in the canonical discourses and cherished in monkish learning,—Arhatship, *Nibbāna*, the Noble Eight-fold Path, *Jhāna*, etc. None of these concepts is associated with the *Dhamma* even by remote implication. The superior position of the monk in the matter of *Dhamma* is nowhere hinted at at all; on the other hand the lay man is exhorted to exert himself to realise the fruits of the *Dhamma*. What the Emperor's conception of these 'Fruits of the *Dhamma*' was is not set forth in explicit or positive terms, but it is evident that it was not mere morality,—though that exactly, as we have seen[19] was conceived in monkish Buddhism to be the 'fruits of the *Dhamma*' for the householder (*gahapati*).

The two concepts, *Dhamma* (Religion) and *Sīla* (Morality) are, as Mrs. Rhys Davids points out, kept distinct[20]: "A man must walk by *dhamma* if he would become *sīlasa* (moral)" and "The king persisting in *dhamma*, in *sīla*, will teach *dhamma*". There is therefore no room for the notion that the Emperor entertained the Theravāda concept of a dual

[17] AN, v, p. 201 and vi, p. 40.
[18] *Manual*, p. 313.
[19] See *supra*, p. 144.
[20] *Manual*, p. 313.

aspect of the religion,—doctrine and practice for the monks and morality for the laity. What in monkish understanding was fixed system and graded practice was to the untutored mind but a way of life, a school of self-culture. In the edicts it is this essentially popular view of the *Dhamma* that is impressed,—not subscription or adherence to a system, but the inward self-culture.

With this popular, non-scholastic, non-doctrinal conception of the *Dhamma*, Asoka's concern about the purgation of heresies from the *Sangha*, described in the legends, does not seem to fit in very well. In the edicts he nowhere alludes to the alleged Council held at Pāṭaliputra, although such an allusion would have been appropriate in Sarnāth, Calcutta-Bairat and some other edicts. This *ex-silentio* evidence is more weighty than the motived assertions of the monk-makers of Asokan legends. That all those who did not subscribe to *Vibhajjavāda*,—the orthodox method, we have already described, employed by monks for explication of the doctrines of the scripture—should be 'unfrocked'[21],—an order so flagrantly partisan would be least likely to issue from the promulgator of the non-doctrinal non-monkish *Dhamma* of the edicts.

* * * * *

Asoka was a Buddhist himself, but on the question of his relationship to Buddhism, it is necessary to 'clear our minds of cant'. In approaching it, even normally sure-footed historians are seen to stumble into three pitfalls, viz., (i) that Asoka in his old age became the 'Head of the Buddhist Church', that is, a sort of administrator-in-chief to the *Sangha*[22]; (ii) that he took an active and energetic part in the propagation of Buddhism; and (iii) that he sent missions to foreign countries for the spread of the religion.

[21] The legend of Asoka's council is set forth in full in *Tur.*, Ch. V, pp. 28–29 and in the commentary on the *Kathāvatthu* (DC., p. 6). But there is no historical foundation for the legend.

[22] "Asoka distinctly adopted the position of ruler of both Church and State during the last twenty-five years of his life, just as Charlemagne did long afterwards in Europe" (Smith, p. 169). "From about 259 B.C., Asoka applied his autocratic power to the Buddhist church which he ruled as its head" (Smith's *Asoka*, 2nd Ed., p. 92). All subsequent writers on Asoka, taking the cue from Smith, describe him as both civil and ecclesiastical ruler (e.g., Bhandarkar's *Asoka*, R. K. Mukerji's *Men and Thought in Ancient India*, etc.).

These are fallacies conveyed sedulously from book to book, though the first one is devoid of meaning and absurd, and the other two rest practically on no historical basis.

India never had a 'State religion', and no Indian ruler in the past ever dreamt of assuming, like the Protestant sovereigns of England, the position of 'Defender of Faith'. No ancient Indian work on politics can be cited which contemplates such a position for the king or any institution analogous to 'State religion'. From the Buddhist *sangha* itself, the idea of even personal headship, as we have already seen,[23] was alien, and what is vaguely termed the 'Buddhist Church' has little sense except as a factitious collective name for all those who lived under the Buddhist *sāsana*, that is, *sanghas* of monks scattered over the country and lay Buddhists in the population.[24] Asoka's concern with the monastic communities was only to prevent their disruption from internal dissensions, which was dictated by the constitutional duty of an Indian king towards self-governing corporations in the kingdom[25]; his concern with the lay communities of Buddhists was to give them the full benefits of what, in terms of modern conception, would be called a Social Welfare Scheme. It was inaugurated by him for the promotion of what he called '*Dhamma*'.

It is this Social Welfare Scheme that constitutes the signal distinction of the reign of Asoka in ancient Indian history.

The edicts issued in the twelfth year of Asoka's reign show that the Emperor's mind had been working on a certain line; that he wished his empire to be a kind of 'holy empire'—that all his subjects should follow and act according to *Dhamma*. The wish was father to the thought of a great State organization of *Dhamma* to be administered by a special staff of officers. So in the edicts of the following year the appointment of this special staff is announced and it is given the significant designation of "Chief Commissioners for the *Dhamma*" (*Dhamma-Mahāmātā*).[26]

The designation was a new one. In the Maurya constitution, the highest officers of the State were called *Amātyas* (Ministers),

[23] *Supra*, pp. 62–63.
[24] See my contribution on *Side-light on some Asokan Edicts* to *Sir Asutosh Memorial Volume*, published from Patna by J. N. Samaddar, 1926–1928.
[25] *Supra*, pp. 120–121.
[26] Kālsi, V, 14, 16; Girnār, V, 4, 9, and XII, 9; Dhauli, V, 3, 7; etc.

each vested with a clearly defined jurisdiction.[27] A large personnel of these officers must have existed, and the heads among them were designated, as we find in the edicts of Asoka, Chief Ministers (*Mahāmātā*—that is, *Mahā-amātyas*), with whom the Emperor had direct personal dealings.[28] Out of this cadre of Chief Ministers, it seems, a special staff was set apart, charged with the specific duty of looking after the *Dhamma* (*Dhamma-Mahāmātā*), which consisted practically in administering the Emperor's new Social Welfare Scheme. In several edicts, Asoka is careful to point out that it is a *new* institution founded by him and that he wishes to leave it as a legacy to his successors.[29]

The activities comprised under the scheme are set out, with more or less elaboration of detail, in several edicts, but they may be summed up under six main heads—(i) establishment of cordial relationship between masters and servants, as well as between the Brāhmaṇas and the Vaiśyas[30] ; (ii) assistance to prisoners and to the aged and the decrepit, (iii) promotion of concord among different Sects (*Pakhaṇḍas*); (iv) maintenance of Buddhist monastic communities[31]; (v) allocation and distribution of gifts to religion or charity from the royal family; and (vi) the privy affairs of the royal house.[32]

From this lay-out of Asoka's Social Welfare Scheme, we can derive a little light on certain features of contemporary social life. In the population there were householders, the

[27] As in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, which is believed to be based on the statecraft of the Maurya period. See *Arthaśāstra*, p. 14 :' Vibhajyāmātyavibhavaṁ deśakālau ca karma ca Amātyāḥ sarva' evai' te kāryāsur'na tu mantriṇāḥ '.

A distinction is drawn here between the king's ' counsellors ' (*mantris*) and the ' executive officers ' (' *amātyas* '). The latter are to act within a defined jurisdiction for each.

[28] Girnār Rock Edict, XII (Hultzsch, p. 22) ; Kālsi Rock Edict, V (*Ibid*, p. 43) ; Delhi-Topra Pillar Edict (*Ibid*, p. 136).

[29] e.g., Kālsi Rock Edict, V ; Girnār Rock Edict V ; Shabazgarhi Rock Edict V.

[30] The reason for the Emperor's anxiety that good relations should subsist between the Brāhmaṇas and the *Ibhas* (*Vaiśyas*) seems to be that the former were teachers and depositaries of learning, but were poor and in need of support from men of wealth who were of the mercantile (*Vaiśya*) caste. The emperor perhaps thought that the cause of learning would suffer if the Vaiśyas did not support the Brāhmaṇas.

[31] The Sangha as coming under the jurisdiction of the Dhamma-Mahāmātā is mentioned in Delhi Topra Pillar Edict, VII.

[32] Kālsi Rock Edict, V, in which private matters of the members of the royal family including himself (as in its Dauli version), brothers, sisters and all other relatives, are referred to.

most respected of them being the Brāhmaṇas,[33] but a portion, not negligible, consisted of those who had embraced the religious wanderer's life. The two are distinguished in the edicts as *Gahatthas* (householders) and *Pabbajitas* ('those who have gone forth'). "There is no country", says the Emperor in one of his edicts,[34] "where these (two) classes (viz.), the Brāhmaṇas and the Samaṇas, do not exist except among the Yonas (Greeks)". There seem to have been pockets of Greek population in India even in Asoka's reign, left over from Alexander's retreat from India a couple of centuries back, and on the north-western frontier of the empire was a Greek State. The Greeks, as the Emperor knew, had no institution like *Pabbajjā* ('homelessness for the sake of religion').[35] In the same edict, the Emperor adds: "And there is no (place) in any country where men are not indeed attached to some sect (*Pakhaṇḍa*)".

The Buddhists, among the sects in the population, had an organization of monastic life, governed by its own laws, which the king was required by the constitution to uphold. In the discharge of this constitutional function, the assignment of certain specific duties in respect of the *Sangha* was made to the *Dhamma-Mahāmātās*, the chief of these duties being that the 'law of schism' should be widely publicized both to monks and to laity and the penalty of expulsion for its breach duly enforced.[36]

As a Buddhist himself, the Emperor must have been anxious to ensure that disruption in the *Sangha* did not set in and the *Vinaya* law in this regard be respected.

But there were sects other than the Buddhists,—proselytizing sects which were apt to enter into unhealthy rivalries, and the Emperor was concerned, in the interest of law and order, to see that they lived in amity and concord. For all sects the Emperor declares his equal regard; he sees something good in the essence of each; he advises sectarians not to condemn each other or exalt their own sect at the expense of others; he desires all sects to live in peace and concord.[37]

[33] In the compound '*Brāhmaṇa-Samaṇa*' in Asoka's edicts it is significant that *Brāhmaṇa* occurs first. See *supra*, p. 30 . . . . In several edicts, respect for Brāhmaṇas is enjoined. See PHI, p. 299.

[34] Kālsi Rock Edict, XIII.

[35] See *supra*, p. 28.

[36] Sārnāth Pillar Edict.

[37] Sāhābāzgarhi Rock Edict, XIII; Kālsi Rock Edict XII; Girnār Rock Edict, XII.

Two edicts show that the Emperor, though a Buddhist himself, dedicated cave-dwellings to the Ājīvakas.[38] Gifts to all sects were made by the Emperor, as well as by other members of the royal family, and the *Dhamma-Mahāmātā* were charged with the duty of seeing that these gifts were properly utilized. Except in regard to supervision over the *Sangha*, which was entitled to claim protection for its own *Vinaya* laws from the Emperor, the *Dhamma-Mahāmātās* do not seem to have had any special duties towards the Buddhists, although the fact that the Emperor himself was a Buddhist might have made them incline somewhat in their favour.

We next come to the question—To what extent was Asoka concerned in the spread and propagation of the religion he had embraced himself? On this point, the legends tell one tale and the edicts another. In the high-flown hyperbole of the legendary accounts, he is said to have covered the country from end to end with a network of *stūpas* and monasteries; the probability, however, is that he rendered financial and other kinds of assistance to such recognized works of piety. But apart from such likely assistance, there is little evidence in the edicts to show that he had any direct hand in the actual propagation of Buddhism either within his own empire or outside. The illusory idea that the Emperor was an enthusiast and propagandist of Buddhism arises from undiscerning identification of '*Dhamma*', wherever it occurs in the edicts, with the 'Buddhist religion'. What may lend a faint little colour to this idea is only a couple of obscurely worded edicts of doubtful meaning.[39]

The first one refers to the ban put by the Emperor on popular festivals called *Samāja*. Perhaps they had become somewhat licentious in character, and it is said in the edict that the Emperor substituted for them shows and entertainments tending to promotion of *Dhamma*.

The intriguing passage in which it is described runs as follows: "But now, in consequence of the practice of Dhamma on the part of King Devānaṁpiya Piyadassi, the sound of drums (*bheri-ghosa*) has become the sound of Dhamma (*dhamma-*

[38] The 'Banyan Cave' given to the Ājīvakas in Barabar Hill Cave Inscription I; the 'Khalatika Mountain cave' to the Ājīvakas (Barabar Hill Cave Inscription II).

[39] Girnār Rock Edict, IV and Kālsi Rock Edict IV.

ghosa), showing the people visual representations (*darsana*) of Aerial Chariots (*vimāna*), of Elephants (*hasti*), of Masses of Fire (*aggi-khaṇḍa*) and other divine (?) figures(*divyāni-rūpāni*)".[40]

The obvious suggestion of the passage would be that, in place of the obscenities exhibited at the festivals, the Emperor had substituted innocent and entertaining shows. Perhaps public pyrotechnic displays and bonfires, under official organization and supervision, are indicated. But the learned Professor Bhandarkar suggests with subtle ingenuity that the 'aerial chariot', the 'elephant' and the 'masses of fire' must have reference to scriptural legends,[41] perhaps because the substitution of them is said to be in consequence of the Emperor's 'practice of *Dhamma*', presumed to be the 'Buddhist religion', and the word, *divya* (in *divyāni rūpāni*), must mean not skiey, but heavenly. If, however, it was intended to turn the people's minds to the religion of the Buddha by means of such shows and entertainments, the forms might have been a little more expressly evocative,—for example, a wheel, a mound or a Bodhi Tree rather than an aerial chariot, an elephant or a ball of fire.

We are told in the other edict about Asoka's sending *Dūtas* (Ambassadors or Envoys) to foreign territories. There is no hint that they were charged with any propagandist mission: all that seems to be said is that the influence of the *Dūtas* sent by the Emperor has redounded to the promotion of *Dhamma*.[42] But the *Dhamma*, for which the Emperor was an enthusiast, was not *Dhamma* in any formal, cultish or clerical sense of the term. It seems to have been identical in the Emperor's mind with Culture in its widest sense,—not a particular system or form of religion, not Buddhism as the monks understood it, but only an ideal, a nobler way of life and conduct, though it is conceived distinctly in the Buddhist spirit by the Emperor.

[40] Hultzsch, pp. 7 and 31.

[41] Ind. Ant. 1912, p. 28.

[42] The word, 'Dūta', evidently meaning envoy, occurs in Girnār Rock Edict, XIII. The edict is very lacunous in places and the relevant words decipherable are as follows: "... The Yona King, and beyond him, four kings (viz.) Turamaya, Antekina, Maga ... here in the king's territory (among) the Yonas and Kambo (jas) ... among the (A)ndhras and Parindas, —everywhere (people) are conforming to Devānaṁpiya's instructions in *dhamma*. Even where the envoys (*dūta*) ... and the instructions in *dhamma*, are conforming to the *dhamma*" (Hultzsch, p. 25).

XII

THE *THŪPA* (MEMORIAL MOUND)

WITH ASOKA we enter upon the great golden age of Buddhism when the religion, no longer a cult confined to the monks, nor to its ancient headquarters in the east (*Puratthima*), is seen flourishing among common people in most parts of his far-flung empire.

Asoka is not exactly the initiator of the age,—he stands out only as its most spectacular, its most towering landmark. It was not through his patronage or propaganda efforts that the religion throve or spread. His true significance in Buddhist history is perhaps more symbolical than intrinsic. But it was in Asoka's reign that the great age had its perceptible beginnings. Eager, many-sided, marked by fresh developments in the faith and artistically creative in its expression of them, it continued from the reign of Asoka into the reigns of the later Mauryas, the Śuṅgas and the early Andhras of the south, considerably overlapping a couple of centuries. It may be delimited chronogically as 270–50 B.C.

Politically it is a much troubled, much distracted and broken-up period in ancient Indian history, but culturally it is seen to be one. Its cultural integrity leaps at once to view from the uniformity of its palæography,[1] the style of its art and architecture with the same repertory of symbols and emblems as decorative *motifs*, and the prevalence of *Stūpa*-worship,—a form of lay Buddhism, different in its complexion from the religion as understood and practised among the monks.

The wide political unsettlements which mark this age had perhaps a few repercussions on the spread and progress of the religion.

[1] In the concurrent opinion of experts in Indian palæography like Bühler, Senart and Chanda, all the inscriptions discovered at Sāñchi, Bārhut and Amarāvatī are written in characters 'not much modified from the Brāhmī characters of the Asokan inscriptions'.

With the petering out of Asoka's great empire through the feeble hands of his successors, northern India was severely shaken by foreign invaders. The Bactrian Greeks infiltrated into India and, following at an interval in their wake, came nomadic tribes from mid-Asia. Towards the close of the period, these outlanders cut up the country and founded aggressive monarchies in Gāndhāra, western Mālwā and neighbouring regions. With the Punjab seized by foreigners and the Deccan parcelled out among local dynasts, the old Middle Country, the *Madhyadeśa*, centring round Magadha, hitherto the fountain-head of Buddhism and Buddhist culture, was left more or less isolated. It lost its ages-old connection with the valleys of the Indus and the Godāvarī, and the old splendour and glamour of the Magadhan imperial capital Pāṭaliputra was bedimmed by the rising glories of Śākala, Vidiśā, Pratisṭhāna and other new cities of the west.[2]

The original 'eastern' (*puratthima*) headquarters of Buddhism ceased to exist with the result that the seats and centres of the religion were dispersed all over the country, and we hear fitfully, through the general historical obscurity that overhangs the situation, of both persecution and patronage of Buddhism by regional dynasts and rulers.

At Pāṭaliputra itself, the first ruler of the Śuṅga dynasty, Puṣyamitra (circa 187–151 B.C.) is said to have been a keen persecutor of Buddhism. Buddhist legends represent him as hunting down Buddhist monks on whose heads he is said to have put a price.[3] On the other hand, to Magadha's north-west lay an extensive Greek monarchy, whose Greek ruler, Menander, a contemporary of Puṣyamitra, ruling from the capital city of Śākala (modern Sialkot in the West Punjab), appears to have been a patron of Buddhism.

[2] See PHI, pp. 306–307.

[3] The main source of these legends is Div., pp. 429–434. The putting of a price of 100 dinārs on the head of a Samaṇa is mentioned at p. 434: "Yo me śramaṇaśiro dāsyati tasyāhaṁ dināraśataṁ dāsyāmi". In *Mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa* (verse 532), the legend of the hunting down of Bhikkhus by Puṣyamitra (under the name of Gomi-mukhya) is mentioned: 'Nāśayiṣyati tadā muḍhaḥ vihārāṁ dhātuvarāṁ stathā Bhikṣavaḥ sīlasampannāṁ ghātayiṣyati durmatiḥ'.

See Imp. Hist., p. 36. In *B.C. Law Volume*, Part 1 (Indian Research Institute, Calcutta, 1945), N.N. Ghose contributes a paper on the question, *Did Puṣyamitra Śuṅga persecute the Buddhists?* and comes on a review of the authorities to an affirmative conclusion.

Menander's fame survives in a Pali work, composed probably much later than Menander's own time, entitled 'Questions of Milinda' (*Milindapañho*). The king, though a Greek (*Yavana*), is believed to have had a Buddhist preceptor, named Nāgasena, who solved for him the dilemmas that the king's acute Greek mind discovered in the scripture. The work is introduced with these 'narrative' verses (*Bāhirkathā*—'outside narrative'):

King Milinda, at Sāgala, the famous town of yore,
To Nāgasena, the world-famous sage, repaired.

. . . . . .

Subtle and knotty questions did he put, many,
Turning on many points. Then were solutions given,
Profound in meaning, gaining access to the heart.

. . . . . .
. . . . . .

Come then! Apply your minds, and let your hearts rejoice,
And hearken to these subtle questionings.[4]

To the progress of Buddhism, however, these stories of local persecution or patronage are not so relevant, for, when this era of political disintegration set in, Buddhism was a developed religion well-established and wide-spread with a firm hold on the mass-mind.

* * * * *

While in the monasteries, the monks kept up their own traditional and characteristic forms of culture and practice,—the fortnightly *Uposatha* service, the liturgical chantings (*Saṅgīti*), the scripture rehearsals, the hymn-singings, the exegesis of sacred texts and the doctrinal debates and discourses (*Kathā*),—among unlearned folk the religion took on a very different complexion. They added to the religion a ritualistic and ceremonial side unknown in the monks' *āvāsas* which had scant relation to doctrine and cult, but was undoubtedly congenial to folk mind. To this ritualistic and ceremonial Buddhism they gave a spectacular embodiment in *Stūpa*-worship.

The *Stūpa* (Pali *Thūpa*) is an artificially constructed mound of earth and stone, invested with holiness. An architectural tradition gradually developed in its construction.

The typical *stūpa* of the age had a central hemispherical

[4] QM, pp. 1–2.

dome called *Aṇḍa*, round the base of which projected a lofty terraced dome called *Medhi*, providing a processional path. At ground level, the *stūpa* was encircled by a massive balustrade of stone called *Vedikā*, fashioned like a wooden fence of uprights and horizontals. At the four cardinal points, the *Vedikā* was pierced with gateways called *Toraṇas*. The balustrade and the gateways of the *stūpa* used to be profusely covered with sculptured symbols, statues, effigies and engraved *genre* compositions in low relief.

But this architectural and decorated form developed after Asoka's reign: the *Aṇḍa*, the central dome, represents the pre-Asokan and perhaps the Asokan form. The *Aṇḍa* is nothing but the factitious representation of a natural mound.

In several bas-reliefs, salvaged from the ruins of *stūpas*, a primitive style of *stūpa*-worship is depicted. They show only the *Aṇḍa*, bare and unadorned or set round with a railing to mark its sanctity, with a single devotee or a group of devotees in the attitude of offering worship. We may imagine *stūpa*-worship to have been like this,—private and more or less individualistic,—in the beginning, but it grew into a regular large-scale congregational ceremony,—the growth being reflected in later *stūpa*-architecture with its more spacious *ensemble*, more spectacular proportioning of the dome, grandeur and magnitude and profuse decoration of the whole setting. The sancity of the dome is now guarded by a high peripheral balustrade, pierced with sculptured gateways, instead of a single railing. Between the balustrade (*vedikā*) and the dome (*medhi*), a circular space of considerable breadth is left for circumambulation by the worshipping crowds.

On an occasion of high festival, the *Stūpa* must have presented a magnificent spectacle, a sight that 'dull would he be of soul who could pass by',—with colourful multitudes passing in and out through the high overarching gateways, moving in solemn mass processions along the 'path of circumambulation', with flowers, garlands, flags, festoons and lighted censers in their hands, filling the air with the resonance of choric chants and instrumental music and high intonings of the Three-Refuge creed. Time has silenced all that piety and pageant, but the timeless stones whisper their accents still.

How *stūpa*-worship found a place and flourished in Buddhism

is a question to which one answer is given by legends of the canon and another suggested by facts of cultural anthropology.

The 'worship of a mound' is in the first place a practice which is not deducible from any of the doctrines of Buddhism; it has not the remotest filiation to the basic ideas of the system, e.g., *Sīla, Samādhi, Paññā, Vimutti*[5]; yet it has sanction and recommendation in the scripture (in the *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta*); in the second place, we find what appears from Nāgasena's observation on it to King Milinda to be cited later, the monk-mind remained unreconciled to this particular form of worship in spite of the scriptural recommendation.

It raises a strong presumption that *stūpa*-worship was not a practice that the system of the religion had evolved from within.

Anthropology tells us on the other hand that in primitive civilizations, long before the emergence of cultured and formal religions, mound-worship like tree-worship was a widely prevalent form of piety. Heights had a mystic sacredness to primitive mind as is evidenced by the Sumerian and Babylonian *ziggurats* built to imitate natural mounds,[6] the Jewish custom of seeking high places for performance of worship and sacrifice,[7] etc. Research from this point of view may perchance reveal traces of mound-worship in the Vedic age among the Aryans of India, not in 'priestly' but possibly in 'folk religion'.

The hypothesis is not wholly untenable, in spite of a missing link, that from 'folk religion', more ancient than Buddhism, mound-worship passed by a process, familiar in the history of religion, into the 'cultured religions' of Buddhism and Jainism when they emerged in the 6th century B.C.

We have made a passing reference to *Cetiyas* (Mounds) mentioned in Buddhist legends.[8] What kind of associations or what purpose they had is not known, but they must have

[5] Compare MahaP, IV, 3: 'Sīlaṁ samādhi paññā ca vimutti ca anuttarā Anubuddhā ime dhammā Gotamena Yasassina.'

[6] See ESS under *Holy Places*.

[7] Ezekiel, XX, 28; IV, 13.

[8] They are enumerated in MahaP, III, 2 and 62. The word, *Cetiya*, in MahaP, III 2, is rendered as 'shrine' by Rhys Davids in Dial, III, p. 110, and in a footnote he calls them 'shrines of pre-Buddhistic worship', although in the earlier translation in SBE, XI, more happily, he leaves the word untranslated. Of the *Cetiyas* of Vesāli, the one in a forest of *sāla* trees, called *Gosiṅga* (cow's horns) is said in MN, 1, p. 212 to have been particularly liked by the Lord and his chief disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna. See also *infra*, p. 168.

antedated the *Stūpas*, the 'sacred mounds' of Buddhism.

As we shall presently see, a cult was invented to rationalise the worship of mounds and attract to it clerical sanction. In Jainism there is no such cult: yet at Mathura was discovered an ancient *stūpa*, badly fallen in ruins, which was found to be a Jaina *stūpa*.[9] It is a pointer to the fact that some sort of primitive Indian mound-worship seeped into both Buddhism and Jainism; but while in the former it was protected by a cult and had a long development, in the latter it remained inchoate.

* * * * *

The Buddhist *Stūpa*-cult is set out in the *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta*.

If, as Winternitz supposes,[10] the *Suttanta* was preceded by a shorter *Parinibbāna Sutta*, describing the 'Great Decease' and the antecedent incidents, which developed later into the *Suttanta*, the legends in the latter of the Lord's ordaining *stūpa*-building and of the memorial *stūpas* built by different clans over the Lord's relics must belong to the developed portion. The *Suttanta* version is almost certainly of the Maurya age and most probably contemporaneous with the reign of Asoka.[11] The probability would rationalise the addendum on the *stūpa*-cult in the *Suttanta*, for we know from other sources[12] that in Asoka's reign *stūpa*-worship, as a popular form of Buddhism, had come to grand efflorescence.

The *stūpa*-legends, in other words, were invented by monks to render canonical what had been uncanonical in its origin and growth,—to invest with sanctity and scriptural sanction what 'popular Buddhism' had spontaneously evolved already. The fact emerges more clearly when we turn a little searchlight on the *stūpa*-cult itself, as presented in the canon.

We are told in the *Suttanta* that the Lord before his decease ordained that a *Thūpa* to the Tathāgata should be erected

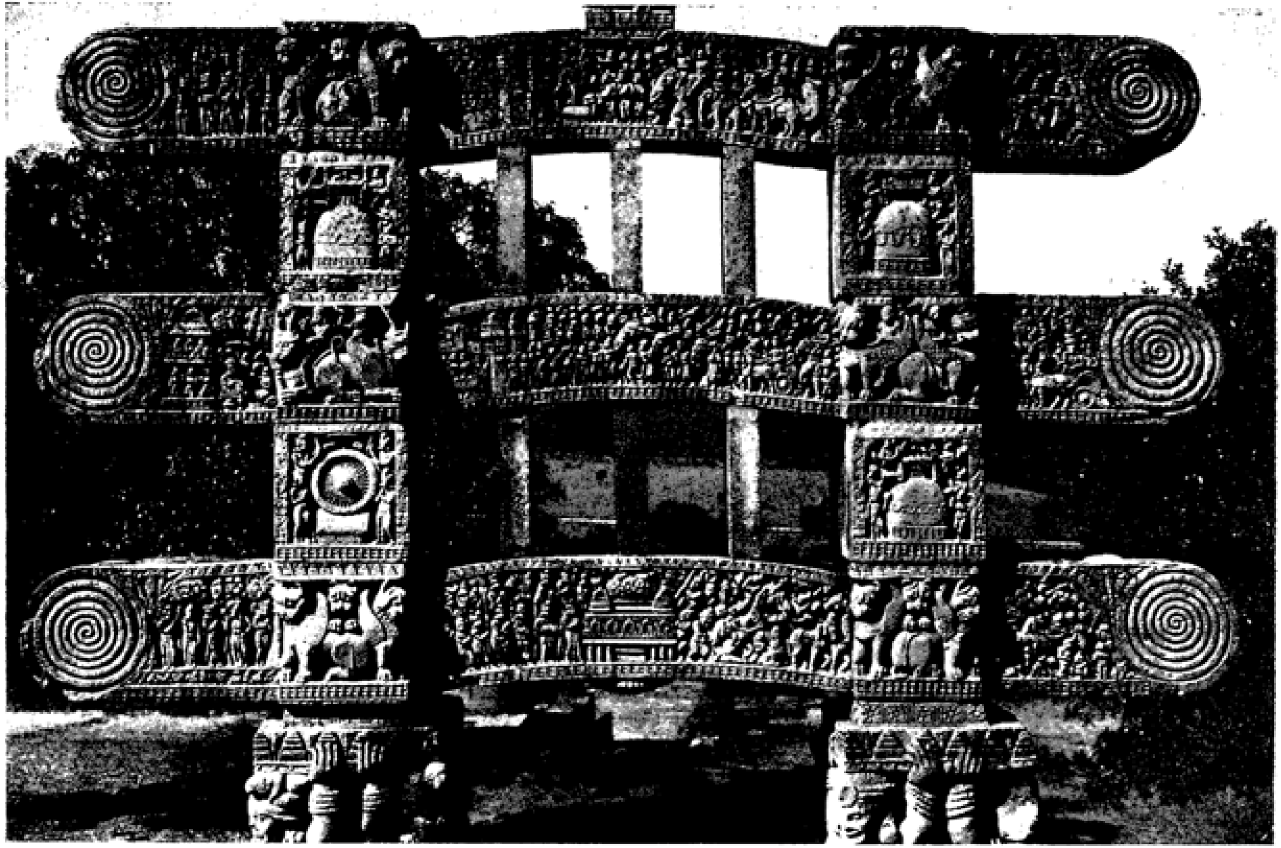
[9] See Smith's *The Jaina Stūpa of Mathura*. At Kankali Tīlā, representing the ruins of an ancient Jaina *stūpa*, a slab was found dated in the reign of Sudāsa, evidently of pre-Kuṣān age. The Jaina *stūpa* must have been an ancient one.

[10] See *supra*, p. 47.

[11] See *infra*, p. 169.

[12] See *infra*, p. 170.

Text page 165



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

SCULPTURE ON THE GATEWAYS OF THE 'GREAT TOPE' OF SANCHI

Text page 173



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

THE 'GREAT TOPE' OF SANCHI (A General View)

at the crossing of four roads and that it should serve as a memorial to him. The injunction, it is further related, was carried into effect by several clans who received at Kusinārā the relics of his body and erected mounds over these relics.[13] The pious fiction is thus set up that a *thūpa* is adorable for its being a memorial, and that the memorial should take the form of enshrinement of relics.[14]

The fiction hardly squares with the facts of the case. Only a few out of numerous ruined *stūpas*, discovered in several parts of India, are actually *dagobas* (Ceylonese form of *Dhātugarbha*, 'container of relics'). Even about these few *dagobas*, the uncertainty remains whether they were actually built over the relics or the relics were afterwards deposited inside in compliance with the injunction that the most proper places for their deposit are the *stūpas*. A *stūpa* is not *necessarily* a 'reliquary shrine': it is so only according to the canonical cult. *Caitya* (Pali *Cetiya*) has sometimes been wrongly derived from *Citā* (funeral pyre),[15] and the *stūpa*, which is the architectural form of *Cetiya*, defined as a 'relic-shrine'.

The fact that not all *stūpas* are dagobas is significant; it suggests that the *stūpa* did not originate in or according to the cult as 'memorial mound', but that the cult was later superimposed upon it. The primitive idea was of Mound-worship; the cult-idea is of Relic-worship, and the two are loosely adjusted in practice.

Turning to the *suttanta* text, we observe how it betrays the difficulty of adopting and assimilating a form of worship that had its origin out of the cult.

Its exact spiritual benefit is left beautifully vague and undefined. "At the four cross-roads a *Thūpa* should be erected to the Tathāgata: And whoever shall there place garlands or perfumes or paint, or make salutation there or become in its presence calm in heart",—so runs the text,—"that shall long be to them for a profit and a joy (*hitāya sukhāya*)".[16] But nowhere is the 'profit' defined,—for, in fact it is not susceptible of definition in terms of Buddhist

[13] MahaP., VI, 62.

[14] "Dhātugharaṁ katvā cetiyaṁ patitthāpesun"—*Sutta-nipāta* commentary. See also D–PTS under *Cetiya*.

[15] As is done by Rapson in his article on *Chaitya* in ERE.

[16] MahaP, V, 26.

doctrines,—and the 'joy', as evident from the next following passage, is nothing spiritual, but one of remembrance only.

It is not to the Tathāgata alone that a *stūpa* may be dedicated. Four classes of persons are spoken of as 'worthy of stūpas' (*thūpāraha*)—the *Tathāgata*, a *Pacceka Buddha*,[17] a *Tathāgata-sāvaka* (translated as a 'true hearer of the Lord', meaning probably a direct disciple) and a *Cakkavatti Rājā* (emperor). With regard to the last, it is said that a *stūpa* built to his memory will serve to make men's minds 'calm and happy' with the thought: 'This is the *stūpa* of that *dhammika* (devoted to the *dhamma*) *dhammarājā* (king of *dhamma*)'[18] —which seems to carry a covert allusion. We have seen that the extant enlarged text of the *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta* yields clear internal evidence of having been compiled during the Maurya age. It makes reference to *Cakkavatti Rājā* (Emperor) and the Maurya imperial capital, Pāṭaliputra.[19] In the Maurya dynasty, there was but one great emperor, Asoka, who was really a '*dhammika dhamma-rājā*', and the words of the text seem to catch an echo of the '*dhamma*' of Asokan edicts.

The *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta*, after giving the *pseudo*-history of the inauguration of *stūpa*-worship in Buddhism, relates that when the relics of the Lord were gathered from the pyre, a Brāhmaṇa, named Doṇa, divided them into eight parts and each of the clans foregathered at the funeral received a part and built a *stūpa* over it, and that they were the first *stūpas* built. This is purely legendary, but Doṇa's enthusiastic recommendation of *stūpa*-worship—" Wide-spread let *Thūpas* be in all quarters!'[20]—reflects perhaps the actual piety and practice of the Asokan age. The motive of the *stūpa*-legends is transparent: the felt need for investing with the sanctity and authority of the canon what popular Buddhism had already evolved quite apart from any cult.

The monkish attitude towards mound-worship, converted now into relic-worship by the *stūpa*-cult, is well typified by Nāgasena's mincing comment upon it in reply to Milinda that this way of relic-worship (*Sarīra-pūjā*) is meant for

[17] For the meaning of this term, see *infra*, p. 204.
[18] MahaP, V, 31.
[19] See *supra*, p. 48.
[20] MahaP, VI, 59—'Vittharikā hontu disāsu thūpā.'

laity only, while the monks, the 'sons of the Jina' (*Jina-puttas*) should rather practise 'understanding and contemplation'.[21]

* * * * *

The old chronicles of Ceylon have preserved the ancient tradition of popular enthusiasm for *stūpa* worship in Asoka's reign. "From the offerings made on behalf of the Buddha in various ways and in various cities", says the author of the *Mahāvaṁsa*, "various festivals are constantly celebrated in honour of *Thūpas*".[22]

It was but natural, after the lapse of many centuries, to associate the emperor himself with this popular movement which marked his reign. Legends thus grew up that the *stūpas* of the age were all built by Asoka himself and that for this vast feat of building activity he employed supernatural agencies. Hsüan-tsang, touring in Magadha in the early part of the seventh century, A.D., heard the legend that "Asoka-rājā commanded genii and spirits to raise *stūpas* throughout Jambudvīpa (India) to the last house of all".[23] Later the author of the *Mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa* (*circa* A.D. 800) reproduces the legend, stating that Asoka "beautified the whole of Jambudvīpa with *stūpas* at one moment through *Yakṣas* (demons)".[24] The figure, 84,000, a conventional one to denote a great multitude, is taken in the legends to represent the total number of *stūpas* built by Asoka.

The hyperbolism of these legends, however, is severely checked by archæological facts. Excavations made by archæologists have up till now yielded no find to corroborate even slightly the legendary account of Asoka's *stūpa*-building activity. How many ancient *stūpas* were of royal foundation is unknown, but the legends undoubtedly establish the fact that during Asoka's reign and thereafter the erection of *stūpas* and paying ceremonial worship to them was the most spectacular and prominent feature of Buddhism.

[21] Milinda, IV, 3, 24–27 (QM, pp. 246–248).
[22] Tur., p. 19.
[23] Beal, II, p. 89.
[24] See Imp. Hist., p. 12 and Text, p. 27: verses 369 ff. give a poetic and fanciful version of the tradition noted by Hsüan Tsang. They describe how the Yakṣas in Asoka's service erected many thousands of monoliths and *stūpas* of many kinds with half a night's labour and invited the emperor to come and see their handiwork.

During this age, commencing from Asoka's reign, *stūpas* were erected in and near every city and town where there were Buddhists in the population and their miniature forms were enshrined in every Buddhist household. The total must have exceeded all count. In the forlorn struggle for existence against time, the smaller ones have perished utterly in the dust of centuries.

But two magnificent groups of *stūpas*, the resorts in their times of multitudes of worshippers and centres of high festival and pageantry,—have been brought to light by archæologists. They are widely separated in locale—one in Central India and the other scattered along the south bank of the Krisṇā river in South India. These two *stūpa*-groups seem from their location to have served two important zones of traffic and population in that age.

The Central Indian group comprises the *stūpas* of Sānchi, Bhilsā and Bārhut. Constructed with an eye to the most striking spectacular effect, they were so placed as to dominate an ancient commercial trunk-route, connecting, by way of Ujjain, the imperial capital, Pāṭaliputra, with the sea-port of Bharukaccha (modern Broach in the Bombay State). Within a short distance of the sites of these *stūpas*, flourished the great city of Vidiśā, ancient headquarters of government in this part of the Maurya empire. These *stūpas* were discovered *in situ*.

The South Indian group, however, was found in ruins and scattered debris. It comprises a chain of *stūpas* spread out in the tract between the lower reaches of the Krisṇā and the Godāvarī in the modern Guntur district of the Madras State. The largest heaps of ruins were found at Amarāvatī and at Nāgārjunikonda, about sixty miles apart, on the same bank of the Krisṇā. Amarāvatī is now a small village and Nāgārjunikonda a wilderness, inhabited by a handful of gipsies and aborigines.[25] But both were renowned and prosperous cities in that age. Amarāvatī was an ancient centre of both learning and commerce, from where merchants used to sail down east to the rivers' estuaries and embark on voyages to the Indian colonies of Indonesia. Nāgārjunikonda was the ancient city of Vijayāpurī.[26]

[25] Memoir of the Ar. Survey of India, No. 54, p. 2.

[26] See Memoir of the Ar. Survey of India, No. 54 (*The Buddhist Antiquities of Nāgārjuniakonda*), p. 5.

The site of these South Indian *stūpas* is soon to disappear from view: it is in the way of a 'river-valley scheme' in the Government of India's first Five-Year Plan which will have the effect of submerging the site under an artificial lake.

When the Maurya empire began to break up bit by bit after Asoka's illustrious reign, Central India passed under the rule of the Bactrian Greeks and then of the Scythians. The ancient highway connecting Pāṭaliputra with Bharukaccha ceased to be a main artery of traffic. A time came when no human footfall was heard upon it, and utter silence and desolation descended on the *stūpas* of Sānchi, Bhilsā and Bārhut; this was probably by the beginning of the Christian era. Forsaken and lost to view, they were saved from ruination and ravage by treasure-trove and stone-quarry-hunters in the long after-ages when Buddhism was extinct in India and none knew what these mounds had stood for.

The South Indian *stūpas*, however, had longer life. Under the Andhra Śatavāhana kings, *stūpa*-worship was kept up in splendour. The art of sculpture in these *stūpas* had thus a longer chance of evolution and their stones show gradual modification of technique, motive and tradition under Indo-Hellenistic influence from Gāndhāra. The earlier sculpture and the later sculpture are clearly distinguishable on the Amarāvatī stones.

* * * * *

It is to Sānchi that we must turn to see the perfect type of a *stūpa* of the late Maurya or early Śuṅga period. At Sānchi several *stūpas* stand in a group on an outlying plateau, the largest of them, discovered in 1818,[27] being in an excellent state of preservation. It is now known as the 'Great Tope of Sānchi'. It offers a striking view of the complete *ensemble* of an ancient *stūpa*, both in its architectural form and in its sculptural decorations, its dome, balustrade and gateways being nearly all *in situ*,—a vast Cyclopæan work not accomplished in one generation. Three or four generations must have contributed to its piecemeal upbuilding; it must have attracted the munificence of royalty and merchant princes, supplemented by public donations; the time, labour

[27] See JBAS, III (1834), p. 489 and IV (1835), p. 172.

and talents of hundreds of stone-cutters, masons and engravers of at least three generations must have been spent upon it without stint.

It is supposed that the Great Tope existed, but in a much less pretentious form in Asoka's time, from a broken Asokan pillar with an edict upon it,[28] which was discovered in a nearby jungle and, in the discoverers' opinion, had stood originally at the southern gate of the Tope.[29] No archæological find however, actually connects Asoka with the 'Great Tope'. In his early life, Asoka had lived in the neighbouring city of Vidiśā, posted as a provincial governor under his father, Bindusāra. Legends speak of a youthful romance which led to his marriage with the daughter of a merchant of the city.[30] But Asoka was not a Buddhist then. Marshall, however, believes that the original *stūpa* was built by him at the same time the pillar was erected (*circa* 250 B.C.) and that it was then only a brick structure of about half its present height and diameter. A century later, according to Marshall, during the Śuṅga period, the brick structure was encased in a covering of stone, increasing its girth and height at the same time, and the balustrade also was put up,—the four gateways having been added as late as the latter part of the last century, B.C.[31]

Whatever the history of its construction,—and it is mostly speculative as Marshall sketches it,—its existence over more than two centuries as a place of public worship, during the reigns of Śuṅga and Andhra kings, is attested by a donatory inscription which mentions Śātakarṇi (*circa* 70 to 60 B.C.) as a reigning king. The inscription commemorates the gift of a slab on the southern gateway by one Vāśiṣṭhīputra Ānanda, 'foreman of the artisans of king Śrī-Śātakarṇi'.[32]

Such gifts were popular demonstrations of piety. On all

[28] The edict relates only to the expulsion of schismatics from the sangha and has no reference to locality.

[29] Hultzsch, p. XXI.

[30] "His (Asoka's) first wife was the daughter of a merchant of Vidiśāgiri whom he met when stopping at the merchant's house on his way to Ujjainī. Her name was Devī, also called Vidiśā-Mahādevī"—DPP, Vol. 1, p. 217.

[31] *Guide to Sānchi*, pp. 31–32.

[32] Lüders's *List of Inscriptions*, No. 346; Maisey's *Sānchi and its Remains*, p. 96. See an interesting article on *King Śātakarṇi of the Sānchi Inscription* by D. C. Sarkar in *Transactions of the Ninth All-India Oriental Conference at Trivandrum* (published in 1940), pp. 686 ff.

the *stūpas* at Sānchi, a total of 285 donatory inscriptions has been discovered. They record the accumulated votive gifts not of one, but of several generations,—of people who came not only from Vidiśā and neighbouring tracts, but from distant places like Ujjain and Puṣkara, and who belonged to various ranks of middle-class society, as indicated by their occupational titles on the *ex-voto* stones,—merchants, members of trade-guilds, artisans, pilgrims, nuns and ladies from well-to-do families, not all of them contemporaries.

The inscribed names of the donors at Sānchi and at Bārhut suggest, from the position of the slabs, that both engraved panels and pecuniary gifts were received from the worshippers and applied in the decoration of the balustrade and the gateways. The ivory-carvers of Vidiśā contributed a large sculptured jamb to the southern gate of Sānchi. The bas-reliefs on this stone must have been executed by them in their own traditional technique on ivory, but so well does it fit in with the rest that it seems that from ivory-carving, a much older art, the new art of stone-engraving, specially in *genre* composition, was derived. But the new medium of stone called for a new technique which the folk artists had not acquired yet.

* * * * *

The decorative *stūpa*-stones are a study not only in folk art, but also in the 'popular Buddhism' of the age.

The art of carving (*takṣaṇa*) was old in India when,—perhaps in the late Maurya period,—people began to decorate *stūpas*. Grammarian Pāṇini, who must have lived at least a century before Asoka, already makes a distinction between 'the art of Firms or Establishments' and 'the art of rural journeymen' in engraving.[33]

A new material, viz., sandstone, had come into use in Asoka's reign. Courtly art shows no hesitancy with the material. But it seems likely that Asoka's court artists were either Iranians or worked under Iranian masters. The fine, hard polish on the Asokan monoliths and their well-carved capitals, in the animal figures of which the stiffness of

[33] Pān, 5, 4, 95: 'Grāmakautābhyāñca takṣaṇam'.

Assyrian stylization becomes fluidly modified by Iranian art-modes, do not represent native genius. In *stūpa* art, we see only the native 'art of village journeymen' (*grāmatakṣaṇa*). It is still fumbling with the new material, not fully conversant with its spatial and plastic possibilities.

It clings to the traditional technique on wood, clay or ivory in dealing with the new unfamiliar art-medium of sandstone. The sense of space and perspective is wanting; the over-crowding of forms and figures on a single slab of stone suggests wood or ivory work. What should be spectacular to sight under the law of range and proportion is rendered too minutely, suitable only for close inspection.

Its weakest point is *genre* composition. The primitive method of 'continuous narration' is adopted, with no regard to either time or space. Incidents happening at different times and places are squeezed into one and the same relief,—the repetition of the main figure being made to indicate progression or scene-shifting as we see in the well-known 'six-tusked elephant relief' on one of the gateways of Sānchi.[34] In showing a multitude of people, the same plane is used, the figures being disposed one above another in columnar array or side by side in a horizontal row, but rarely one behind another, dividing the relief into several thicknesses. The figures are of equal height in complete disregard of distance and perspective, and the importance of any particular figure is indicated only by increasing its size. The human figures are conventional and expressionless, though the animals and birds have more of life and movement.

There is evidently no expert guidance in the technique; there is also no eclecticism in the motives,—nothing to show clerical direction or interference. The *stūpa*,—its building, its decoration, its worship,—was all an affair of common folk, of lay unlearned Buddhists.

The jumble of motives and themes in *stūpa* sculpture is extraordinary,—crude, bizarre, comical, realistic,—embracing all that folk mind could conceive in its odd intermixture of folk-lore, superstition, fancy, as well as piety. It is in the surroundings of such crudities that the holy themes of Buddhism, the idealistic elements of *stūpa* art, appear.

[34] This relief is fully described in BBA, Ch. VII.

Those, who decorated the *stūpas*, evidently did not approach the work in the spirit of the stained-glass decorators of mediæval Christian cathedrals. Theirs was not a 'religious art', preoccupied, as Vincent Smith wrongly concludes, with 'the sacred story'.[35]

Its absolute spontaneity,—complete freedom from all outside influence or direction, whether from professional experts or from monks and clerics,—is brought home by simply passing the eyes along the carved figures and inset reliefs. As art, it is neither created nor exclusively inspired by Buddhism[36]: about it there is no preciosity.

Thus folk myth and superstition supply one order among the figures carved,—the fantastic gnomes and guardian deities of both sexes (*Yakṣas and Yakṣinīs*); celestial dancers and musicians (*Apsaras* and *Gandharvas*); deities of folk-cults whose names, inscribed on Bārhut stones, are untraceable in known legend or mythology, e.g., Virudhaka and Cakravāka (perhaps a serpent king as shown by his turban surmounted by a five-headed cobra).[37] From these semi-celestial creatures of popular myth and superstition, artistic fancy turns to realistic scenes,—vignettes from rural life, showing villagers, their huts and their domestic animals much as they may be seen in rural India to-day two thousand years after. From these scenes from life, the artists' fancy passes down to animal representation, single or grouped, and, a rung lower, to comic monkey-stories.

The introduction of simian episodes among decorations of a graver sort is like importing 'comic relief' into sculpture. Conceived in a vein of broad rustic humour, they abound on the stones of Bārhut. But one wonders, if piety were the motive of this art, how these excruciatingly odd and funny engravings could conceivably be related to the holiness of the place and how a monastic supervisor (*Navakammika*), whose hand in *stūpa* construction and decoration is supposed by

[35] *History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, p. 78.—"The main object of the artist was to illustrate his Bible, and, if perchance, the illustration could be made into a pretty picture, so much the better; but anyhow the sacred story must be told."

[36] HIIA, p. 36—"The art of Sānchi is not, as art, created or inspired by Buddhism, but is early Indian art adapted to edifying ends".

[37] See *Bārhut*, Book III, pl. LV, No. 58 (Virudhaka) and pl. LXII, No. 70 (Cakravāka).

Barua,[38] could possibly have tolerated them in the places they occupy. Let us look at a few examples.

One panel shows 'monkey-manicure'.[39] A man of gigantic figure lends himself to be manicured by a troop of monkeys, who, finding the job a difficult one, impress an elephant to assist them. The monkey-barber sits on a stool in front of the human giant, while his assistants try to pluck a hair out of the man's nostril with a pair of pincers. But their strength not being equal to the task, they fasten the handle of the pincers to an elephant's shoulder with a rope and a monkey drives it on with a goad.

The capture of an elephant by monkeys is shown in another panel.[40] The animal is tied up with a robe and dragged along by a procession of monkeys with great triumph and *eclat*, beating drums, blowing conch-shells and sounding cymbals in sundry comical attitudes.

A third panel shows a monkey oppressed with thirst, for whom a holy man draws water from a well. The monkey drinks his fill of the water poured Indian-wise into his joined palms, and, while departing, rewards the benefactor with a grimace.[41]

To realize the folk mind in *stūpa*-worship and the folk-accent in *stūpa*-art is to come face to face with a reverse side of Buddhism. From the legends of the Lord put into canonical texts, rehearsed and chanted in congregational liturgies and made the subject of *abhidhamma* exegesis by the monks, what folk mind has caught is just the inspiration and colour. Shuffling somehow out of the preciosity of monkish learning, the religion has taken on a popular aspect. It seems to find in this age a new, perhaps a little 'vulgarised', expression in its unclerical ritualistic worship, in its motives of art, in attitudes of mind and spirit, often at odds with the approved system of the religion.

[38] Prof. Barua seems to think that *stūpa* construction and decoration used to be supervised by 'Navakammikas' from the monasteries, and that the decorations were intended to represent the canonical texts visually (*Barhut*, Book III, pp. 73 ff). The evidence in support of this supposition is vague and unconvincing.

[39] See Plate XCVII in *Barhut*, Book III.

[40] See Plate XCVI (148a) in *Ibid*.

[41] See BBA, p. 45 (Plate VI, 1).

APPENDIX TO XII

(On *Stūpa* and *Eḍuka*)

The immense vogue of *Stūpa*-worship in this age (270–50 B.C.) did not go unnoticed or unappraised by adherents of other religions.

In Brāhmaṇical works written in Sanskrit, Buddhist *Stūpas* are referred to,—they were too obtrusively visible all over the country to be by-passed or ignored. But they are contemptuously termed *Eḍukas* (structures of rubbish).[42]

In a passage of the *Mahābhārata*, in which the degeneracy of the times in the Iron Age (*Kali*) is described in a prophetic strain, one of the signs of degeneracy is said to be the enormous popularity of *Stūpas*. They mushroom, it is said, anywhere and everywhere, and people forsake the gods to adore mounds and the earth is dotted with them in stead of with temples.[43]

Yet the measure of the prevalence and popularity of *stūpa*-worship may be taken from the fact that attempts were made to assimilate it in non-Buddhist cults and religions. The Buddhist *stūpa* was sought to be converted into a symbol of the Brāhmaṇical *Śaiva* cult under the name of *Eḍuka*, —its central hemispherical dome (*aṇḍa*) being invested with a fresh significance as a phallic emblem.

Evidence of it is found in a Sanskrit work, entitled *Viṣṇudharmottara*, a sort of supplement or appendix to the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*.[44] In part iii, chapter 88 of the work are laid down instructions about the 'architectural formation' of an *Eḍuka* (*Eḍuka-rūpanirmāṇa*). The *Aṇḍa* is treated as a *liṅga* (phallic symbol).

This work, in the opinion of Stella Kramrisch who has written a mongraph upon it, is not earlier than the 5th and belongs probably to the 7th century.[45]

[42] See St. Petersberg Dictionary under *Eḍuka*.

[43] Mahābhārata (Asiatic Society's Edition), Vanaparva, vv. 13074–13076.

[44] This work has been printed and published by Venkatesvara, Bombay.

[45] See Stella Kramrisch's monograph on *Viṣṇudharmottara*, Calcutta University, 2nd Ed., p. 200.

XIII

TRENDS OF FAITH SYMBOLISED IN *STŪPA*-ART

WE HAVE observed that the art that appears on the *stūpa*-stones is not a 'Buddhist art': evidence of it lies plainly in its amazing mixture of *motifs*, in which the specific themes of Buddhism by no means predominate. Obviously the purpose of this art could not have been to illustrate Buddhism or to 'tell the Buddha-story': it was simply and solely to decorate and adorn the *stūpa*.

Yet the *stūpa*-decorators, rural craftsmen and lay Buddhists, presumably not learned in scriptural lore, who donated their skill and labour as an act of piety, have left in this art traces of their cherished faith,—in Buddhist symbols and emblems, in engravings of *Jātaka* stories, in reliefs depicting scenes from the life of the Lord, taken from scriptural legends known to them.

The art is manifestly primitive, but the themes are not so. They are borrowed from the legends, but are not, as even a casual inspection will reveal, just these legends visualised on stone. The legends are touched with *nuances* that are not in them: both in substance and in spirit, the sculptured renderings show fine shades of difference from their textual originals. The reason does not lie in the sphere of art or technique. The art on the *stūpa*-stones is not objective; the legends, before becoming themes of art, have gone through a different mental medium. Between the scriptural legends and their sculptural counterparts, the disagreements suggest in subtle ways fresh approaches to the religion, new angles in regarding the Lord's life and personality, and the pressure of a new Buddha-concept.

The divergence is not as between the monk-mind that shaped the legends and the lay mind that reproduced them. It goes down to deeper roots: (i) the symbols and emblematic forms which the art uses in lavish profusion betoken the

different sense and spirit in which *stūpa*-worship in that age is regarded by common people ; (ii) the *Jātaka* stories point to a bifurcation that has come about between the old *Bodhisatta* concept and an emergent Buddha-concept ; and (iii) the scenes from the life of the Lord betray peculiarities of treatment which grow, not from art-modes, but deeper down from the fundamentals of faith.

Altogether it is a developed Buddhism that is reflected from the art. We are made aware by the visible and tangible evidence of the stones that the religion is no longer at its old moorings,—that there has been advance to new positions in faith and doctrine.

* * * * *

Buddhist emblems, symbols and figurative designs appear for the first time in Buddhism,—as marginal decorations in this sculpture.

The major forms are stereotyped, and they excel greatly the *genre* compositions in fineness and firmness of execution. But these forms had not been invented by the *stūpa*-artists ; they were already in use, current and familiar among the Buddhist population.

About their evolution, the theory advanced by Foucher is that they had originally been invented to mark pilgrims' souvenirs with 'local colour' ; that, shedding their original purpose, they passed current among the Buddhists ; and, lastly, they became common as Buddhist emblems, typifying the sacred scriptural events on them without allusion to locale.[1]

Among the numerous symbols and emblems, the minor ones are foot-prints, lotus, umbrella, ladder, etc. They are distinguishable from the four major ones, typifying the four great "moments" of the Lord's life,—Elephant for the nativity, Banyan Tree for the 'enlightenment', Wheel for the first sermon, and Mound for the 'Great Decease'. They are repeated endlessly in the sculpture.

It is in the scriptural legends that these major forms originated : they reduce the legends to a sort of short-hand, but the difference is palpable in suggestivity, expressiveness and effect between legend and symbol.

[1] BBA, p. 15.

In the process of symbolic reduction, all the positive and concrete contents of a legend which are addressed to the understanding are effaced. What stands is only the final gist and effect of it, and this, the symbolism catches at a special angle. The spiritual communion with the Lord's life, which the legend in its literary elaboration opens, is replaced in the symbol by a mere worshipful recognition of the supreme holiness of that life. In the texts the events have reality and expansion in space and time, while in their symbolic reduction what remains is only the sense of their sanctity and glory. It is this that the sculpture distils and diffuses.

We may stop to consider the symbolical marginal decorations. They have no doubt their artistic effect, but that was not what the artist had perhaps primarily intended.

As one stops before a *stūpa* to take in the total overall impression of the sculpture around it, the symbols become suggestive from their places: they distil into the impression the inner spirit of the worship. Round the pictures is an element of pomp and pageantry,—an embroidery of astonished gods, men, animals and birds. The embroidery is not purely decorative: it corresponds in this naturalistic early art to the Nimbus which later Indo-Hellenistic art borrowed from Greek sources. The single symbols, as well as the symbolic embroideries, carry the same purpose as the Greek nimbus. They impress the special character of "separateness" on the objects depicted and also on the whole *stūpa*,—distancing them from the common and the normal, marking them as 'holy'.

Stūpa-worship in this age is in fact re-oriented from its conception in the canon. The worship is nominally 'canonical'; but the spirit as well as the object of the worship is changed fundamentally. It is not 'tranquillity of mind' (*cittapasāda*) or an 'emotion recollected in tranquillity' from the remembrance of a departed Tathāgata, that is sought, but unliftment of mind to the contemplation of a transcendent glory,—of something in the unapparent which is "somehow both intensely real and yet unnatural, beyond our power or our wit to cope with, standing in sharp contrast to the world of normal experience to which we are adapted".[2]

[2] The words are taken from an article by Prof. John MacMurray (No. 52 in 'This Changing World' series) in the *World Review* of October 1943.

The sense and awareness of this glory interpenetrates all the Buddhist themes in *stūpa*-art: it is palpable on the sculptured renderings of the legends, in an added *nuance* not contained in the legends themselves.

* * * * *

We are struck by two outstanding peculiarities in these renderings:

(i) In the first place, we become aware of a peculiar sensitiveness on the part of the artist to certain typical details of the legend which he leaves unmodified by art, aiming solely at exactitude in the representation.

If the legends were taken as merely narrative or descriptive, the artist in rendering them would claim a certain freedom of treatment, depicting the main figures and incidents, but exercising his art more freely in the poses, the positions, the interdependence and disposition of the figures. That is the common practice of all artists dealing with sacred subjects, and its classic example is the mural of 'Last Supper' by Leonardo in the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan. But the *stūpa*-artist deliberately denies himself this freedom.

On the *stūpa*-stones of this age are in fact the beginnings of a long and persistent tradition in Buddhist art.

The legend has it, for example, that four gods received the Lord, the moment he came out of the mother's womb, on a piece of fine white linen. It is shown in numerous nativity scenes at Sānchi and Bārhut where the gods are invariably four. A later version substitutes God Sakka with a single attendant god in place of these four, and in the nativity sculpture of a later age (Indo-Hellenistic), the substitution appears faithfully. The older legend insists that it was in a standing position that Māyā was delivered of the divine child, while later legends describe the mother lying on a couch. We see the earlier sculpture conforming to the earlier legend, while the recumbent mother is a feature of later Indo-Hellenistic work.[3] Again, in the legend the Buddha, in the interval between his enlightenment and his final decision to give its benefit to the world, is said to have spent a week

[3] See O. C. Ganguly's article on *Some Buddhist Sculptures in relation to some Buddhist Texts* in *New Indian Antiquary*, Vol. I, pp. 514 ff.

apiece in meditation under five trees.[4] These seats of meditation are represented on one of the Bārhut stones: they are five in number, the numerical exactitude being noted in the accompanying epigraph, "Five Seats" (*Pañcāsana*).[5]

This peculiar sensitiveness of sculpture to legend, first seen in Asokan *stūpa*-art, is best viewed in its belated efflorescence in a marvellous architectural *tour de force* outside India,—in the ancient city of Borobudur in Java, where, during the reign of the Sailendra dynasty (*circa* A.D. 750-850), an entire hill was converted into a Buddhist *stūpa* and profusely decorated with innumerable Buddha-images and sculptured Buddha-legends. The version given in the *Lalitavistara* was taken and each legend carved with almost photographic accuracy of detail. The stone became, as it were, the text visualized.[6]

We have to look for an inner motive and meaning, not merely mimetic, in this artistic tradition,—in this constant attitude of the artist to his theme. The legend must have been conceived by him as something not really descriptive or narrative at all, but an expression of some fixed and eternal truth which will not admit of an artist's taking liberties with.

(ii) In the second place, while the artist will not hesitate to depict a *Bodhisatta* ('Buddha-to-be'), the Lord's incarnation in a previous birth, from a *Jātaka* story, he stops short where the *ensemble* requires the placing of a figure of the Lord in depicting a Buddha-legend.

Many panels in *stūpa*-sculpture represent stories collected in the 'Jātaka Book' of the canon, which seem to have been current among Buddhists, of the Lord's previous births. The Lord is represented in these stories as having been born as a bird or an animal or a man, and in depicting him in a previous human birth, the artist does not hesitate to set him forth in human form and figure,—only it is distinguished either by a heightening of stature or by introducing behind him or by his side a few companions with folded hands in worshipful poses. But a Buddha-figure the artist carefully refrains from producing even when it is called for by the

[4] Maha, I, 2–5.

[5] Bar-I, p. 78. The reliefs, however, have been found in a broken condition (see Barhut, Book I, p. 57).

[6] See *Krom* (1926) where the texts are given in translation.





Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

ENGRAVED PANELS OF SANCHI SHOWING IMITATION OF IVORY WORK

Text page 177



Courtesy :- Archæological Department, Government of India

THE MANICURIST MONKEY

requirements of visual art. A lacuna seems unnecessarily left.

On the *stūpa*-stones are displayed innumerable forms and figures of deities or celestial beings, conceived with imagination and rendered with remarkable felicity and grace. A typical Buddha-figure could presumably have been invented by the same artistic imagination as had conceived them in order to round off scenes taken from the holy legends. In the legends themselves the Lord figures in human relations, and in representing a scene out of them, there would be no sense, from the point of view of art, in omitting the most central and significant figure. Some motive in the artist's mind is betokened by the mystery of this 'Unseen Buddha'. It is an intriguing question what laid this inhibition on art, made these artists maim their workmanship and leave such a noticeable void, which the Buddhist *stūpa* artists (Indo-Hellenists) of a later age and generation did not hesitate to fill with a typical Buddha-figure.

The reticence in respect of the Buddha-figure is a deliberate, self-imposed one, religiously observed by the sculptors who decorated the *stūpas* of Sānchi, Bārhut and (early) Amarāvatī. The divine child is absent from the nativity scene; Prince Gotama's horse is riderless in the scene of renunciation; the seat under the Bodhi tree is vacant in the scene of enlightenment; the dais is unoccupied at the first sermon; and only a miniature mound symbolizes the Great Decease. Footprints are the utmost limit to which the artist will go to convey the Divine One's presence.

This, again, is curiously inconsistent with the letter and the spirit of the legends themselves, for the Lord is conceived in them as a person who is heard and seen and is set in earthly and human surroundings. It is evident that the artists did not envision this Buddha of the legends, 'heard and seen': some other concept of the Lord must have risen on their mental horizon in that age. In their spiritual awareness, therefore, a holy legend perhaps became something more than an episode of the Lord's life.

If the sculpture is looked at from the point of view of art, the blank for the Lord's figure is an obvious blemish; if, on the other hand, it is regarded from the artist's own conception of his work, not as a picture, a mere *genre* composition,

but as the truth of the holy legend visualized, the omission becomes intensely meaningful.

Off-hand explanations of this 'mystery of the Unseen Buddha' have been suggested,[7] but none is adequate which is not exploratory of its relation to developments in the faith reached in that age,—for it is their own religious consciousness that the sculptors have impressed on stone, their own sense and understanding of the legends and their own concept of the Lord.

* * * * *

The artist's peculiar approach to a Buddha-legend and his deliberate omission of the Buddha-figure are phenomena that betoken in fact the unfolding of a new phase of Buddhism. Like, every other phase of it, it centres in a Buddha-concept.

The primitive Buddha-concept, as we have seen, had a basic humanity; perhaps it was infused into the legends from the background tradition of a great teacher and supremely holy man. With the dimming away of that tradition, the concept got more or less unfixed. But it is retained, modified by a cult, in the legends, heightened but not transmuted, as the Superman (*Mahāpurisa*) with physiological distinctions (*Lakkhaṇa*), supernatural powers (*Bala*) and superhuman attribtues (*Iddhi*).[8]

The humanity of this Superman is left in no doubt: it is shown as subject to metempsychosis[9] and subject to the law of *kamma* in the *Jātaka* stories. The unifying idea of these stories is that the perfect Buddha was preceded in his former births by imperfect Buddhas, called *Bodhisattas* for distinction,

[7] The theory of Mr. O. C. Ganguly, for instance, is that the *stūpa* artist refrains from inventing a form to represent the Lord out of regard for the following passage put into his mouth in the *Brahmajāla Suttanta*, DN: "The outer form, brethren, of the Tathāgata stands before you, but that which binds him to rebirth is cut in twain. So long as his body shall last, so long do gods and men behold him. On the dissolution of the body, beyond the end of his life, neither gods nor men shall see him". The passage only carries on the implication of the doctrine of *Nibbāna*, which is a state in which no ego-substance, psychic or material, remains (see *supra*, p. 88 footnote 21. Mr. Ganguly's theory assumes either that the 'village journeyman' artist knew the doctrine of *Nibbāna* and realised the impropriety of making the Lord 'visible' in art after his decease, or that the monks who were presumably conversant with the doctrine put an inhibition on the artist. Neither alternative is tenable.

[8] See *supra*. p. 120.

[9] Mahā-sudassana Suttanta, DN; Mahā-Govinda Suttanta, DN; Makhādeva Sutta MN.

but from the Bodhisattas to the Buddha the progression is conceived on the same line as that of a human personality, gathering the merits of its deeds (*kamma*) though a cycle of rebirths.

But we have observed also how the question of the Lord's humanity got involved in the monks' *Abhidhamma*, in the 'Personality' (*Puggala*) speculations,[10] posing a 'Buddha-personality' distinct from human. The 'Doctrine of Buddhahood' became a leading tenet of the faith.[11]

As the doctrine develops, the man is more and more merged, as it were, in the ideal and the abstract. The Buddha comes more and more to represent the actuality of the doctrine, an ideal embodied, the living 'Mirror of the Dhamma'.[12]

In a number of passages in the canon, we observe this idealizing trend,—the process of refining away all that is human and personal about the Lord, as in the fine 'lotus simile' in which he is likened to a lotus born in water, but rising above it undrenched,[13] in the description of him as unsoiled by earthly matter,[14] in the comparison of him to a flame,[15] etc.: fluid and figurative ideas, but which point in the direction of a supramundane (*lokuttara*) concept. The *lokuttara* conception of the Lord must have emerged very early in Buddhism, if, as tradition has it, it formed the foundation of faith of the Mahāsanghikas, one sect of whom assumed from it its own credo-name.[16]

A further step was taken by metaphysical thought from this inchoate semi-docetic conception, viz., that the Buddha exists, not merely undefiled by the conditions of earthly existence, but actually above and independently of them. Yet to these conditions he voluntarily submits himself, appearing to men on earth, not in a 'birth' in biological sense, but in a 'manifestation'. The nativity of the Lord is essentially a 'wonderful miracle' (*Acchariy-abbhuta dhamma*): not a

[10] Puggala-paññatti, Chs. IV, 1–2 and IX, 1–2 (HT, pp. 97 and 104). See *supra*, pp. 119–120.

[11] See *supra*, p. 119.

[12] Dhammādassa, as described in MahaP., II, 8–10.

[13] Mahapad, DN (See *Dial*, ii, p. 32).

[14] AN, iii, p. 140.

[15] QM, p. 114.

[16] The Lokuttaravādins, a sect of the Mahāsanghika school, whose scripture is extant in the *Mahāvastu*. See *supra*, p. 145.

normal human birth, but descent of a being from heavenly (*tuṣita*—' of the delightful heaven ') to an earthly form. His emergence is attended with marvellous happenings, proclaiming that it is no human baby born, but a heavenly being descended.[17]

The metaphysical refinements give a curious slant to the *Jātaka* stories and their underlying notion of ' rebirths '.

In the canon itself we find the word *Jātaka* (previous birth) substituted by the phrase, *Pubbe Nivāsa* (previous habitation).[18] The substitution is significant: the new expression embodies the new idea of the cult. The birth or re-birth of the Lord has shed its old meaning and implication. What the legends relate of the Buddha is now taken to be not incidents of a determinate human career between birth and death, but the lines of a pattern of ' Buddha-life '. The Buddha exists timelessly: his apparent birth is really manifestation, and what the legends record are only the fixed modes in which he manifests himself.

It strongly recalls and may well be the Buddhist version of the *Avatāra-vāda* (Doctrine of Incarnation) of the Bhāgavata cult[19] the influence of which on Buddhism is dealt with in the following chapter.

This development of the Buddha-concept was almost certainly pre-Asokan: Emperor Asoka himself subscribed to it, for which there is lithic evidence: it inheres in the *stūpa* sculpture of the Asokan age. In the canon the only legend in which it is set forth is the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta*, DN. (translated as the ' Sublime Story ').

The legend is of unique importance as offering a Buddha-concept wholly different from that in other parts of the Theravāda canon.

* * * * *

This legend has its usual ' statement of occasion ' (*nidāna*). The Buddha presented in the *nidāna* is the familiar *Satthā*

[17] Acchariy-abbhuta-dhamma Sutta (MN, No. 123). See *F-Dial*, ii, pp. 222–226.

[18] The author of the ancient exegetic work, *Culla-niddesa*, however, fails to grasp the distinction between ' pubbe nivāsa ' and ' jātaka ' and characterizes the *Mahapad.* as a ' Jātaka ' (Stede's *Culla-niddesa*, p. 80).

[19] See *Bhagavad-Gītā*, Ch. IV, vv. 6–7.

among his disciples, though his picture is touched up, as is not unusual, with a supernatural attribute.[20]

He overhears a casual conversation among the assembled Bhikkhus, and, "arising from his seat, comes to the pavilion in the *kikari* (capparis trifoliata) grounds and takes his seat on the mat spread out for him". "And when he has sat down, he says to the brethren—What is the talk on which you are engaged sitting here, and what is the subject of conversation among you?" The Lord is told that it is on the subject of his 'previous habitations' (*pubbe nivāsa*).[21] A Superman, according to dogma, is gifted with antenatal memory, and out of it the Lord unfolds to the disciples the tale of his former existences.

These 'former existences' are in the *Jātakas* conceived in terms of human personality, as metempsychoses, as transition through diverse forms of being,—vegetative, animal, human and celestial.[22] In each, the empirical fruits of *kamma* are gathered and the form changes in rebirth. It is not so in the 'previous existences' described in the *Mahāpadāna*. The personality involved in them remains fixed and immutable, untouched by *kamma*,—the one, eternal, unalterable Buddha-personality.

Each 'previous existence' described in the *Mahāpadāna* is not the life-story of a person, but a fixed pattern of life. Seven such 'existences', inclusive of Gotama Buddha, are described. The 'pattern' is fashioned out of the legends of the canon,—the birth, the 'four signs' (*nimitte*), the renunciation, the hesitancy between the status of a *Pacceka Buddha*

[20] viz., the attribution of the power of clairaudience. of hearing through 'heavenly sense-organ, pure and superhuman',—'dibbāya sotadhātuya visuddhāya atikkāntamanusāya' (DN, II, p. 4).

[21] The translation of the expression, *pubbe nivāsa*, as 'previous birth' in Dial, ii, p. 4, para 1, is obviously wrong. It is translated in other passages as 'former lives'.

[22] In the Jātaka stories, the Bodhisatta is born "83 times as a *sannyāsin*, 58 times as a king, 43 times as a tree-god, 26 times as a preacher, 24 times as a minister, 24 times as a priest, 24 times as an heir-apparent, 23 times as a gentleman, 22 times as God Indra, 18 times as a monkey, 13 times as a merchant, 12 times as a rich man, 12 times as a hen, 10 times as a deer, 10 times as a lion, 8 times as a goose, 6 times as an elephant, 5 times as a Garuḍa, 4 times as a horse, 4 times as a tree, 3 times as a potter, 3 times as an untouchable person, 2 times as a fish, 2 times as an elephant-rider, 2 times as a rat, and once each as a carpenter, ironsmith, frog and hare." In each of these lives, he did one or more good deeds (See B. Bhattacharya's *Buddhist Esoterism*, O.U.P.).

and the calling of a *Sammā-sambuddha*, the 'turning of the Wheel', and the institution of the Order. But reality has completely disappeared from the narrative: in the enwrapping haze of hyperbolism, each event described seems to take on the fixity of an emblem, unrelated to time and space.

The seven 'existences' are as Vipassī, Sikhī, Vessabhu, Kakusandha, Konagamana, Kassapa and Gotama, and in each the life-pattern is the same, the variations being only in the shifting earthly relations,—social rank (*jāti*), family-stock (*gotta*), span of existence, the species of tree under which enlightenment is attained, the two chief disciples, the attendant Bhikkhu, paternity and place of birth.[23]

It is the 'Eternal Buddha' doctrine and it had a long after-development, but it seems that initially the tale of successive manifestations closed with Gotama.

In one legend, for instance, the Buddha points to his last resting place at Kusinārā and says to Ananda: "Now I call to mind, Ananda, how in this spot my body had been six times buried, and, when I was dwelling here (Kusāvatī) as the righteous king, for the seventh time. But I behold not any spot, Ananda, in the world of gods and men . . . where the Tathāgata for the eighth time will lay aside his body".[24] In another, the Lord declares: "This is my last birth; I shall not be born again".[25]

But granting an Eternal Buddha and his potency to manifest himself, the limit must seem arbitrary. So in later evolution of the idea, the manifestations multiply.

In a late canonical work, *Buddhavaṁsa* (Buddha-generations), not only is there a versified account of the seven Buddhas of the *Mahāpadāna* from Vipassī to Gotama, but of eighteen predecessors of Vipassī from Dīpaṅkara to Phussa, and also mention of a Buddha-to-come, named Metteya. The work has a sequel called *Anāgatavaṁsa* (Unborn Generations) in which the legend of Metteya Buddha is developed. In a work, entitled *Nidāna-kathā* (Statement of Occasions), a sort of prefatory commentary on the *Jātaka* stories, the Buddhas, including Gotama, are twenty-five in number.

[23] See Dial, ii, pp. 6–7.
[24] Mahā-sudassana Sutta, DN (SBE, XI, p. 288).
[25] Acchariy-abbhuta-dhamma Sutta, MN (F-Dial, ii, p. 225).

In *stūpa* sculpture, however, Gotama Buddha is taken as the last manifestation.

The plural form, *Buddhas*, is nearly as common in use as the singular Buddha in the canon. A distinction however appears. The Buddha who delivers the discourse in the legend is always introduced in the *nidāna* as the Lord, the one *Satthā*. It is only when a generalized statement of law, doctrine or rule is given in the discourse that we find it attributed to 'the Buddhas', e.g., 'This is the instruction of the Buddhas'—*etaṁ Buddhāna sāsanam.*[26] The 'Buddhas' evidently are conceived as a class of supernal beings of whom Gotama represents the type only.

In the Buddhist faith, the doctrine of plural Buddhas seems accepted and established already by the time of Asoka. Of this, there are two interesting lithic records:

(i) In the fourteenth year of his coronation, the Emperor, perhaps on pilgrimage, happened to visit a spot, about 13 miles north-west of Lumbinī and found there a small *stūpa* dedicated to Konagamana, one of Gotama's mythical precessors. He enlarged it to double its size, offered worship and set up a commemorative pillar there.[27]

Six years after this event, he came to Lumbinī and set up a monolith to mark it as the birth-place of 'Buddha Sākyamuni'. To the Emperor's faith, one Buddha was as adorable as another, and between the mythical Buddha and the Sākyamuni his faith seems to have made no distinction.

(ii) The seats of Enlightenment of the seven Buddhas are represented in sculpture both at Sānchi and at Bārhut. On the eastern gate of the 'Great Tope' at Sānchi, they are shown, but without descriptive epigraph[28]; in the Bārhut stones, however, the names of the Buddhas occur under different kinds of trees of Enlightenment (*Bodhidruma*). Each Buddha has his particular tree, exactly as listed in the *Mahāpadāna*, viz., Vipassī—Bignonia (*Pāṭali*), but the stone is broken off where the name should have been; Sikhī—white Mango (*Pundarika*); Vessabandhu—Shorea Robusta (*Sāla*); Kakusandha—Acacia Speciosa (*Sirisa*); Konagamana—Ficus

[26] *e.g.*, Mahapad. (DN, ii, p. 49).
[27] Nigālī Sāgar Pillar.
[28] Plate VII(1) in BBA.

Glomerata (*Udumbara*), the stone here again being broken off at the name; Kassapa—Banyan (*Nigrodha*); and Sākyamuni —Ficus Religiosa (*Assattha*).[29]

The treatment in sculpture of all the seven seats is alike and the Bodhi-tree of Gotama is not specially distinguished by any indication.

* * * * *

The age in which *stūpa* worship flourished seems thus to have outgrown the *Satthā* Buddha concept, presented in the legends, round which earlier Buddhism had centred.

The first article of the Buddhist creed is 'Refuge in the Buddha'. But the Buddha of later conception is neither the *Satthā* nor the one Buddha of the credo: he is the Eternal One with multiple incarnations. So there is a developed creed in the canon which runs thus: "Those who attained to Buddhahood in the past and the Buddhas to come, as well as he (Gotama) who has attained to Buddhahood now, in order to dispel the misery of the many,—all these propounders of the Good Dhamma do exist and will exist. Such is the Law (*Dhammatā*) of the Buddhas".[30]

The transformation of the old concept altered also the fundamental tenets of the faith.

Dhamma used to mean the sum and effect of the Lord's teachings. The Lord was its teacher, whether as *Satthā* to his sect or as *Sammā-saṁbuddha* to mankind. He invites learners, not to swell his following, but solely to expound the truth of the *Dhamma*[31]: "Let a man of intelligence come to me", says the Lord, "who is honest, candid, straightforward and I will instruct him. I will teach him the Dhamma. If he practise according as he is taught, then to know himself and to realize even here and now that supreme goal, for the sake of which clansmen go forth from household life into the homeless state, will take him seven years, etc."[32] But this

[29] *Bar-I*, pp. 39–41.

[30] SN. i, p. 176 (Brahma Suttas, 2)—' Yec' abbhatītā saṁbuddhā ye ca Buddhā anāgatā, ye c'etarahi saṁbuddho bahunām sokanāsana: Sabbe saddhammaguruno vihaṁsu viharanti ca. Atho pi viharissanti esa Buddhāna dhammatā'.

[31] Udumbarika Sīhanāda Suttanta, DN (see Dial, iii, p. 51—' May be, Nigrodha, you will think: the Samaṇa Gotama has said this from a desire to get pupils; but you are not to explain my words thus. Let him who is your teacher, be your teacher still'.

[32] *Ibid.* (Dial, iii, p. 50).

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Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

BUDDHIST SYMBOLS AND EMBLEMS ON STONE

PLATE XIX

Text page 184



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

TYPICAL INDO-HELLENISTIC BUDDHA

PLATE XX

Text page 177



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

THE MONKEY-CAPTURED ELEPHANT

PLATE XXI (i) page Text 195



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

MEN AND MONKEYS WORSHIP AT AN ALTAR WITHOUT AN IMAGE

PLATE XXI (ii) page Text 195



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

CELESTIALS AND MEN FLOCK TO THE IMAGELESS ALTAR



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

THE SCENE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT
without the BUDDHA



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

THE MIRACLE OF THE BUDDHA'S WALKING ACROSS THE GANGES
in spate from the MAHĀPARINIBBĀNA SUTTANTA, I. 33, with no BUDDHA figure

view of the *Dhamma* as the founder's teaching was replaced by the dogma, arising in consequence of the transformed Buddha-concept, that the truths of the *Dhamma* are not taught; they exist in the nature of things, and the Buddha in each manifestation only reveals and confirms them.

That is the dogma of Revealed Religion—" 'Tis Revelation what thou think'st Discourse ".[33] It gives in later passages of the canon a new turn to the interpretation of doctrines.

Thus the three fundamental doctrines of Buddhism, viz., Non-permanence (*Anicca*), Reality of Sorrow (*Dukkha*) and Non-existence of Ego (*Anattā*), are held to be not *doctrines*, but eternal *verities*: they emanate from the eternal order of things and not from any teacher propounding them as categories of thought: " Whether the Buddhas arise or whether the Buddhas do not arise, it remains a fact in the fixed and necessary constitution of being that all its constituents are transitory (*anicca*). This fact a Buddha discovers and masters, and when he has discovered and mastered it, he announces, teaches, publishes, proclaims, discloses, minutely explains and makes it clear that all the constituents of being are transitory",[34] and so with regard to the other two doctrines.

If the Buddha was not the teacher of the *Dhamma*, how was his relation to the *Dhamma* conceived?

We can see a nascent concept about it forming in such passages of the canon as: " He who sees the Dhamma, sees me: he who sees me, sees the Dhamma ".[35] The *Dhamma* is the Lord's tangible self-expression,—his token to humanity,—and a step in advance in metaphysical thought evolved a doctrine, which became fundamental in the later Mahāyāna phase of Buddhism, that one of the Lord's 'three bodies' (*Trikāya*) was Dhamma. The Dhamma is accordingly identified, as in the *Dhamma Sutta* creed cited above, with the eternal Order, *Dhammatā*.[36] In the life of the Lord, as

[33] Dryden's *Religio Laici*, I, 71.

[34] AN, iii, p. 134 (as translated by Warren in *Buddhism in Translations*, p. XIV).

[35] SN, iii, p. 120 (XXII, 87)—' Yo dhammaṁ passati so maṁ passati: Yo maṁ passati so dhammaṁ passati.' Cf. Milinda, p. 71—' Yo dhammaṁ passati so Bhagavataṁ passati '.

[36] " Though originally the spirit of the Buddha may have been synonymous with the doctrines of the Buddha, it was not long before it became synonymous with the root of life, the essence of being, the norm of the universe "—Mahayana, p. 30.

the holy legends sketch it, this *Dhammatā* is expressed and embodied.

The legends thus present themselves in a very different light,—*Dhamma* inheres in them, and not merely in the teaching of rule or doctrine they contain. It is in this sense that the *stūpa* artists take the legends, transmuting the eternity of their truth to the eternal life of art. Their peculiar sensitiveness to all the points in the legend yields its secret: *they are anxious to keep its Dhammata intact.*

* * * * *

When the maker of the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta* puts the gloss on every incident of the pattern of Buddha-life he has set out to describe: 'it is the rule, the Spiritual Order, *Dhammatā*', he seems already to fix its lineaments in stone, as it were. It is not capable of being altered,—it cannot be modified without damage to its timeless verity and admits of no variation, and it must not be treated in the manner of a human story which can be told in more ways than one.

The legends themselves have become holy, worshippable, and, when in later centuries their texts were reduced to writing, a cult of book-worship appeared in Buddhism.[37] Neither books nor book-worship existed in the early Asokan age, but we have only to look at the nativity scenes in *stūpa* sculpture to realize that, beyond setting forth the legendary story, there is the idea in the sculptor's mind of keeping the holiness of the legend intact, of illustrating its *dhammatā*.[38]

Thus each of the following texts in the *Mahāpadāna*

[37] "We see growing up in Mahāyānist works ideas about the sanctity and efficacy of scripture which are foreign to the Pali canon. Many *sūtras* (for instance, the 'Diamond-cutter') extol themselves as all-sufficient for salvation: the *Prajñā-pāramitā* commences with a salutation, not as usual to the Buddha, but to the work itself, as if it were a deity, and Hodgson states that the Buddhists of Nepal worship their nine sacred books"—Eliot, Vol. II, p. 50. So it is said in the *Suvarṇa-prabhāsa*: "This sūtra is to be worshipped intently by one attired in a spotless dress, cleansed with perfumed water and with a compassionate and awakened heart" (Suv., p. 5).

[38] A feature of these sculptured renderings of holy scenes is the recurrence of the one and the same scene on one monument. Kramrisch interprets this feature thus: "(It) establishes the ever-present actuality of the scene. What matters is not that it once happened, but that in all its importance it *did* happen and this cannot be repeated too frequently. In its significance the scene is ever present. The repetition of the same in several compositions on one monument is a feature cognate with the timelessness in the rendering of each composition"—*Indian Sculpture*, p. 33.

Suttanta has its exact counterpart in the nativity engravings:

" (i) It is *Dhammatā* that, whereas other women bring forth sitting and reclining, the mother of a Bodhisatta brings forth not so, but standing . . . It is *Dhammatā* that when a Bodhisatta issues from his mother's womb, gods receive him first, afterwards men; (ii) It is *Dhammatā* that, when a Bodhisatta issues from his mother's womb and has not yet touched the earth, four sons of gods receive him and present him to the mother; (iii) It is *Dhammatā* that, when a Bodhisatta issues from the mother's womb, he comes forth stainless; (iv) It is *Dhammatā* that, when a Bodhisatta issues from the mother's womb, two showers or water appear from the sky, one of cold, the other of warm water, wherewith they do the needful bathing of the Bodhisatta and his mother; (v) It is *Dhammatā* that, when a Bodhisatta has come to birth, he stands firm on both feet and, with his face to the north, takes seven strides while a white canopy is held over him ".[39]

Dhammatā is translated into English as 'the Rule', but it hardly reveals the inwardness of the significance it bears to the Buddhist mind. The Chinese translation, *Fa-hsing* (Nature of Things), seems a better rendering.[40] The implicit concept is of an eternal spiritual order in cosmic life to which each incident of a Buddha-manifestation conforms.

* * * * *

The *stūpa* artist lived in the faith of his age and subscribed to its central Buddha-concept. There was nothing corresponding to the concept in the artist's repertory of plastic forms. A man, a god, a Yakṣa, a Gandharva could be represented: their formal types existed, and they are actually displayed in untold variety in *stūpa* sculpture. But the Buddha, as conceived in that age, was none of these, and no form had been imagined of him,—until in a later age, as Foucher believes, a nameless Bactrian Greek artist, settled in Gāndhāra, hit upon the brilliant idea of figuring him forth as the 'Indian Apollo'.[41]

[39] Mahapad, DN: Dial, iii, pp. 11–12 (Abridged).

[40] " *Dharmatā* is translated in Chinese as Fa-hsing, the nature of things, nd therefore *Dharmatā-Buddha* (in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*) means the Buddha whose nature is reality itself and from whom all other Buddha-personalities flow "—Suzuki, p. 320.

[41] This is Foucher's theory first stated in BBA.

Wherever, therefore, art in the delineation of a Buddha-legend, calls for a Buddha-figure, the artist makes an implicit gesture of *non possumus*, a silent declaration that He whom the legend speaks of is an Eternal Being, unique and outside all known forms of existence, and so beyond the reach of plastic art.

There can be no truth in an image of the Buddha: it was an article of Buddhist faith in that age. If something as a remembrancer of the Lord were required, a 'memorial symbol' (*cetiya*) only must be used.

There is a *Jātaka* story, in the introduction of which the idea is amplified. The question is mooted how, in the physical absence of the Lord, due reverence to him can be paid. Three kinds of sacred memorial (*cetiya*) are considered,—(i) a relic of the Lord's body (*sārīrika*), (ii) an object with which the Lord in his life-time was physically associated (*paribhogika*, i.e., 'something used), and (iii) a likeness which represented the Lord (*uddesika*). The first is said to be proper only after the Lord's decease and the third is ruled out because it would be 'unreal and imaginary' (*avatthuka manamattaka*). It is the second kind that is recommended, and the story goes on to relate how in the ancient Jetavana monastery at Sāvatthi a memorial of the Lord was placed, with great pomp and ceremony, in the form of a seed of the Tree of Enlightenment.[42] It is explained by the commentator that by a representational (*uddesika*) memorial is meant a Buddha-image (*Buddha-paṭimā*).

We can imagine a devout lay Buddhist of the age, say, a sculptor by profession, spending at a monastery the holy *Uposatha* day in the edifying company of monks. The legends of the Lord he would hear solemnly intoned at the mixed gathering, usual on such an occasion, might prompt in him a yearning to show the Lord's glory in a conception of plastic art. A perfectly natural yearning,—but would he receive any encouragement from the monks? He would be told that the Lord could not be imaged; his art could reproduce the legend, but to represent the Lord, he must have recourse to symbols, for the nature of the Buddha-being must preclude

[42] Fausböll, vol. IV, pp. 228 ff.—Kaliṅga-bodhi Jātaka, No. 479.

the attribute of form, and to devise it would be 'unreal' (*avatthuka*) and 'imaginary' (*manamattaka*).

The disposition of the symbols on some of the stones of Sānchi and Bārhut show how the artist's yearning for the divine form is held in check and stopped short, as it were: in one Sānchi panel, foot-prints, tree-*motif*, wheel and umbrella are combined in vertical succession, "alluding", as Kramrisch remarks, "in a childish way to the bodily appearance of a man"[43]; in a Bārhut panel, the Buddha is symbolically shown clambering down a ladder from heaven to earth by the print of one foot on the topmost rung and another on the bottom.[44]

Thus in these sculptured stones we have record of a phase of Buddhism that flourished over two centuries during the long and obscure interim between Asoka and Kaniṣka. It developed a popular ritualistic and ceremonial side; it had also other doctrines and dogmas.

This phase of Buddhism centred in a semi-docetic Buddha-concept,—that set forth, expounded and amplified in the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta*. The legends in this age were no longer *Buddha-vacana* in the older sense,—no longer the teachings and injunctions of the Lord, but sacred revelations of a supramundane spiritual order. Yet no system has evolved, organizing these inchoate doctrines and beliefs and summing up their specific values. 'Semi-Mahāyāna Buddhism of the Asokan age' is a label devised by a writer for this phase of development,[45] but 'Pre-Mahāyāna' would perhaps be more appropriate for its transitional character,—for it grows naturally into the Mahāyāna Buddhism of the age that follows.

[43] *Indian Sculpture*, p. 26.
[44] *Ibid.* and Fig. 22.
[45] N. Dutt in AMB, pp. 36–39.

XIV

BHAKTI (DEVOTION) IN THE CULT

BHAKTI is an ancient term in Indian religious terminology, —it is cited by Pāṇini.[1] It is rendered somewhat loosely by western scholars as 'Devotion'. Grierson, the eminent linguist and orientalist of the last century, was however careful to point out that the concept conveyed by *Bhakti* is untranslatable by a foreign equivalent.[2]

The concept is also difficult to pack into an exact definition. An attempt was made by Śāṇḍilya, a late exponent of the Bhakti cult, to define it, but all he was able to do was to set forth and distinguish its various implications.

According to Śāṇḍilya, it is distinguishable from mere faith and belief in a system of religion. In a person whom *Bhakti* inspires, it is 'the idea of the Lord', rather than his ordainments or teachings, that occupies 'the forefront of the mind and heart'. *Bhakti* is known by its 'fruits' which appear "in reverence and worship paid to the Adored, the casting out of all unclean thoughts and passions, the celebration of the praise of the Lord and the wish to continue to live in his service and for his sake alone".[3]

A *Bhakti*-cult is a 'cult of grace',—of self-surrender to the Lord, of invocation of his saving grace with prayer, worship and propitiation. It obviates all need for volition and effort on the devotee's part. In Indian religious thought, the antiquity of this cult is higher than of Buddhism and Jainism: it survives to our day in the wide-spread religious system called *Vaiṣṇavism*. The cult was anciently known as the 'cult of *Bhagavā*' (*Bhāgavata cult*).

Bhagavā, as we have seen, is one of the several appellatives

[1] Pan, IV, 3, 95, 98.
[2] ERE, Vol. II, p. 539 (Grierson on *Bhakti-Mārga*).
[3] See *Bhakti Sūtra* (Aphorisms on Bhakti), 1, 2.

by which in the Buddhist legends the Lord is denoted.[4] While the others,—*Satthā*, *Buddha*, *Tathāgata* and *Jina*—are cultishly significant, the name *Bhagavā* is not specially Buddhistic: it is the chosen name which in all *Bhakti*-cults of India is applied to the Adored.

It is profitable to compare the *nuances* of the pair of names, *Buddha* and *Bhagavā*.

The latter would be the devotee's favourite name: it is the name *stūpa*-decorators commonly used in referring to the Lord[5]; the former would be the favourite name with the disciple, the learner and understander. They are expressive of different mental attitudes, of different ways of regarding the Lord. Buddhism started with a Buddha-cult, affiliated to the Buddha-name,—the cult of those who would seek to share in the Teacher's 'enlightenment'. There is no parallel or pronounced 'Bhagavā cult' in Hīnayān Buddhism. Yet the Lord is also called *Bhagavā*. Perhaps the devotee's regard for him took a tinge from the *Bhakti* doctrine that was characteristic of a contemporary *Bhāgavata* cult.[6] Anyway *Bhakti* was concretely translated later in Buddhism as we shall see, into forms of worship, prayer, propitiation and grace.

* * * * *

The system that grew up within Buddhism under the ægis of the Buddha-cult is the system presented by the Theravāda.

In this system the Lord is only the path-finder; the *Dhamma* is the 'way' (*magga*); its practice 'wayfaring', and its goal a definite spiritual attainment.[7] The 'Aryan Eightfold Path' (*Ariya aṭṭhaṅga magga*) was the most ancient name for the 'way', and the orthodox Theravāda cherishes the primitive ideal: it is traditional in the school.

The most authoritative exposition of it is contained in a late manual of Buddhism by Buddhaghosa, the finest flower of Theravāda learning,—an Indian monk who settled in

[4] See *supra*, pp. 82–83, 85.
[5] See Bārhut Inscriptions—Barhut, Book III, pp. 39–40.
[6] See *infra*, pp. 205–206, for the Bhāgavata cult.
[7] This conception of the religion will be found set forth in Gopaka-Moggallāna Sutta, MN (F-Dial, Vol. II, pp. 154 ff), Mahā-sakuludāyi Sutta, MN (*Ibid.*, pp. 1 ff.), and *passim* in MN.

Ceylon and composed this work at the Mahāvihāra of Anurādhapura near the turn of the 5th century A.D. Its suggestive title is 'The Path of Purity' (*Visuddhi-magga*),—a variant name, but for the same ancient path with the same goal at the end.[8] The 'supreme effort' (*Brahmacariya*) is Buddhaghosa's doctrinal expression for the wayfaring,—and it is held to be a difficult, almost impossible, undertaking for the un-ordained. The wayfarer's equipments as listed by Buddhaghosa are three, viz., *Sīla* (Morals), *Citta* (Concentration), and *Paññā* (Understanding). No extraneous aid for him is contemplated,—and in this scheme of the practice of the religion there is no room for 'saving grace' from any quarter or for the associated acts of worship, prayer, etc.

Yet in the Buddhism of the Theravāda there are elements incongruous with this fundamental system and scheme.

These elements are (i) the Three Refuges, (ii) the concept of the Lord as the 'lord of compassion and grace', and lastly, (iii) the practice, which developed later, of adoration and worship of this Lord. Though basic in the religion, they inly contain inconsistencies, self-contradictions and indications of earlier and later development.

* * * * *

The Threefold Refuge (*Ti-saraṇa*) is the summary creed of the religion,—a formal declaration by the believer that he takes refuge, first, in the Buddha, secondly, in the Dhamma, and thirdly, in the Sangha. We are told that the Refuge Formula did not originally exist in Buddhism: that it was invented for use later in the service of ordination of a monk.[9] But how obviously inconsistent and contradictory is the formula with the Lord's express and unambiguous injunction to Ananda at Beluva that the only *saraṇa* (refuge) for a follower after the Lord's decease must be the Dhamma! Any other refuge is excluded in definite terms.[10]

The idea of *saraṇa* (refuge) itself is essentially characteristic

[8] The way to *Nibbāna*, according to Buddhaghosa, is the 'Path of Purity': "I shall expound the Path of Purity. Here by Purity is meant *Nibbāna* which is free from all taints and is exceedingly pure. The means of its acquisition is called the Path" (Vm, pt. I, pp. 2–3). For the Ceylonese tradition about the composition of this work, see Bud., pp. 24–25.

[9] Maha, I, 12, 4.

[10] See MahaP, II, 33.

of a *Bhakti* cult. It is the devotee's self-surrender to the Lord, such as is enjoined in its extreme form in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*: "Give ye up all *dharmas* and take *saraṇa* in me (Lord Kṛṣṇa) alone. From all sins will I deliver thee".[11] Over against it, is the idea of primitive Buddhism that the devotee's only refuge must be the *Dhamma*. Not self-surrender, but self-reliance—to be 'a light (or island) unto one's own self' (*atta-dīpa*),—is conceived to be the gist and effect of the Lord's teaching. It is not from the system of teaching, but from the *Bhakti* element in Buddhism that the creed of *Saraṇa* evolved,—a flower that grew not on the parent tree itself of the faith, but the graft of *Bhakti* on it.

It is difficult to date the creed, but the formula seems to have existed in the time of Asoka, and a passage in one of his edicts addressed to the monks definitely recalls it,[12] though it does not speak of the Emperor's actually taking 'refuge,' but only entertaining reverence for and faith (*pasāda*) in the triad, Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

One of the discourses in the canon points clearly to a time when the 'threefold refuge' of Buddhism had not attained to formular definition. Instead of three, we find four, viz., *Satthā*, *Dhamma*, *Sangha* and *Sikkhā*, described as holds of the faith.[13] The idea there is not one of *Saraṇa* (Refuge), but of *Saddhā* (Faith): "In the first place, O Bhikkhus, where a brother has doubts in the Teacher, is uncertain regarding him, has not confidence in him, has not faith in him,—then is his mind not inclined towards zeal, exertion, perseverance and struggle".[14] This self-reliance,—'a form of inner confidence which arises from an intuitive or intellectual insight into the truth of the *Dhamma*',—is not that self-surrender of the spirit which *Bhakti* demands.[15] A

[11] Ch. 18, v. 66: 'Sarvadharmān parityjya māmekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja; Ahaṁ tvāṁ sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayisyāmi mā śuca'.

[12] Calcutta-Bairat Edict.

[13] Cetokhila Sutta, MN. 'Cetokhila' means literally 'the bolt of the heart', and this 'bolt', as the Sutta conceives it, is the sceptic attitude of mind. Removing this bolt is opening the heart to the Faith. *Khila* also means 'barrenness' and 'removing barrenness of heart' is as good a rendering of 'cetokhila'.

[14] SBE, Vol. XI, pp. 213–214.

[15] See N. Dutt's article on the *Place of Faith in Buddhism* in IHQ, 1940, pp. 639 ff. The writer quotes approvingly the definition of Faith as conceived in early Buddhism given by Anagarika V. Govind as "a form of inner confidence" (*Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy*).

secret disharmony between the creed and the faith has been felt and expressed by cultured Buddhists of our day.[16]

We come next to the doctrine of Saving Grace (*Karuṇā*). The concept of the Lord as Saviour, whose grace obviates the need for self-exertion on the part of the devotee who takes refuge in him, belongs perhaps to a pre-Buddhistic stratum of thought. One of the *Upaniṣads* enjoins on the devotee the worship of the Creator, for it absolves him from the bondage of *Karma* (deeds done in life.)[17] In the scripture of the *Bhāgavata* cult, the doctrine, seen in its germ in the *Upaniṣad*, is developed and enriched. But the idea that the grace of the Lord is enough and need of self-exertion for salvation on the individual's part is illusory goes directly against the grain of the basic 'moralist theory' of the Theravāda system, viz., that Religion is primarily 'practice' and is concerned with the control and direction of the will.

In glaring inconsistency with this theory, *Karuṇā* (Saving Grace) came to be attributed to the Lord and the invocation of it instituted in the forms of set prayer (*Vandana*) and ritualistic worship (*Pūjā*), and in the last section (*nikāya*) of the *Suttapiṭaka* of the Theravāda canon a few manuals which magnify and stress this element of the religion are included. The difference of these manuals in spirit and temper from the earlier works of the canon is most striking.

A couple of verses in the ancient hymnology, *Dhammapada*, turn on what is termed 'Buddha-worship' (*Buddhapūjā*) in which worship means no more than recognition of the Buddha's lordship and the homage of reverence to him

[16] *Per* Prof. Barua of the Calcutta University, himself a Bengali Buddhist of Hīnayāna School: "When a man steps into a Buddhist monastery, I shall not be surprised if he will meet a votary or superstitious worshipper taking refuge in the Triad by repeating the set formula . . . But whatever the interpretation of this commonly accepted formula, to me the servile expression, 'I take refuge', seems utterly incompatible with the heroic spirit which the Buddha sought to impart to all in what he said and what he did. It calls up a train of cowardly associations which befit a degenerate age." (*Faith as in Buddhism* in *Ashutosh Mookerjee Memorial* Volume III, Pt. 3, p. 254).

[17] SvU, II, 7—The verse has been variously translated. It is of mystic import, but refers to the worship of the Creator under the name of Sāvitrī and says: 'tatra (i.e. in Sāvitrī) yonim kṛṇavase na hi te pūrtam akṣipat'. This text is translated by Dr. Radhakrishnan as "make your source (dwelling) there. Your work will not affect you" (see *The Principal Upanisads*, Muirhead Library of Philosophy, 1953, p. 720).

and his disciples.[18] There is also a later hymnology in the same section of the canon, *Thera-therīgāthā* (Songs of the Elders and the Elder Sisters) in which the *Pūjā* is conceived differently,—not so much as a mental and spiritual attitude as an act or rite. In other works of the same stratum of development like the *Vimānavatthu* (Legends of Celestial Palaces) and the *Apadāna* (Sacred Legends), a distinctly ritualistic side to *Pūjā* is added.

The Buddha, the *Thūpa* (Memorial Mound) and the *Dhātu* (Body-relics) have already become cult-objects in them. Flowers and incense are offered to the Buddha (though there is no image of him yet); lights are placed round the *stūpa* and hymns of adoration chanted. A number of stories in verse is collected in the *Vimāna-vatthu* which speak of devotees admitted to 'celestial palaces' (*Vimānas*) simply on the merits of ritualistic worship (*pūjā*), prayer (*vandana*), pious gifts (*dāna*), etc. The *Vimāna-vatthu* and the *Apadāna* mark indeed 'a stage in the growth of the Buddhist faith when the ethical side has practically disappeared yielding place to the popular'.[19]

This line of development is evident in the scripture even of the orthodox Theravāda; outside, it is freer and more pronounced.

In a passage for example, of the *Mahāvastu* (of the Mahāsanghika school), *Nibbāna* is held to be attainable even through mere ceremonial worship of the Lord, 'with flowers, garlands and incense, with flags and standards, and with painted decorations',—for such worship, it is said, redounds to infinite spiritual merit.[20] It is the very negation of the 'wayfaring' ideal, but is the natural corollary to the doctrine of the Lord's saving grace.

* * * * *

[18] Verses, 195–196:

"Pūjārahe pūjayato Buddhe yadi vā sāvake
Papañcasamatikkante tiṇṇasokapariddave;
Te tādise pūjayato nibbute akutobhaye
Na sakkā puṇṇaṁ saṅkhātuṁ im' ettamapi kenaci"

[19] *Per* Prof. Barua in *Mahāyāna in the Making* in *Ashutosh Memorial Volume*, III, pt. iii. p. 179.

[20] Mhu, II, p. 362: 'Tathāgatasya yaḥ satkāraṁ kuryāt puṣpamālyagandha dhvajapatakā hi vā'th anulepanehi na tasya puṇyasya śakyaṁ paryantam' dhigantum . . . yāvanna parinirvāṇaṁ tasya paryantaḥ'.

In the 'Enlightenment legends', the subtle differentiation, made between the 'Enlightened Lord' and the 'Lord of Compassion and Grace', points to the fact of later introduction of the second concept. In the legends the two concepts are telescoped, as it were; yet the earlier and the later can be distinguished and the fact distilled that the Lord of Compassion was not the original idea, but in the nature of an after-development *within* Buddhism.

Three legendary accounts, which substantially coincide, are extant of what transpired between the Lord's *Bodhi* and the final *Saṁbodhi*.[21] After the Enlightenment, the Lord is supposed to have hesitated for a spell whether he should keep to himself or share with mankind the Supreme Knowledge attained by him.

The legends depict the situation with striking dramatic effect as the crisis of a vast cosmic drama. In the worlds of gods and men there is a stir and sudden flurry. The chief of the gods, Brahmā Sahampati,[22] comes down from high heaven to beseech the Lord; mortals flock with piteous appeal; there is a flutter of anxiety evident even in animate and inanimate nature.[23] Finally the Lord's 'Buddha-eye' as it is termed, opens and there comes over him a wave of divine compassion *Karuṇā*).[24] Surveying with his 'Buddha-eye', the misery, ignorance and helplessness of unenlightened creatures, he casts off his self-doubts: the 'Door of Deathlessness' (*Amatassa dvāra*), he proclaims, is thrown open now, and what mortals need to do is only to 'send their Faith' ('*pamocantu saddham*').[25]

The legend is a fantastic one,—but one of the oldest of Buddha-legends. It marks the attribution by Buddhist faith of an additional characteristic, viz., *Karuṇā*, to the Enlightened, rounding off the concept of his personality,—a *Buddha* who is also a *Sammā-saṁbuddha*. *Karuṇā*, we have to take note, comes not *with* but *after* the Buddhahood, not

[21] Maha, I, 5; Mahapad, II, 36–40; *Lal.*, pp. 392–400.

[22] The appellative, *Sampati*, is probably the Pali form of *Svayambhū* (self-born), but in the *Lalitavistara*, *Sikhī* is substituted for *Sampati*.

[23] See the poetical version of the incident in Lal.

[24] Lal, p. 400:

[25] The verse occurs in all the three versions of the legend. The expression 'pamocantu saddham' is not very clear in its meaning, but the verb is most probably equivalent to 'sending'. Etymologically it means 'freeing'.

evolved from the Lord's inner nature, but coming to him in response to the experience of his 'Buddha-eye'.

By the attribution of *Karuṇā*, the Lord, the Enlightened One, has become the Lord of Compassion,—the Saviour.

Whether this attribute was consistent with 'Buddha-nature' was even questioned by one school of Buddhist thought which held it to be a form of *Rāga* (Passion) incompatible with the nature of a Buddha.[26]

When the concept thus developed through association of a new 'saviour quality' with the Lord, two types of Buddha-personality came to be distinguished, viz., 'Buddhas for self alone' and 'Buddhas for all'.[27] The Buddha who was the object of the cult, was the *Sammā-saṁbuddha* (Buddha for All), distinguished from a *Pacceka-saṁbuddha* (Buddha for self).

The metaphysical distinction finds illustration in a somewhat grotesque legend of the *Divyāvadāna*[28] about a king named Kaṇakavarṇa ('Of Golden Complexion') who is said to have entered on 'the path to Buddhahood', but whose path was crossed by a loathsome experience. He happened to see a man in the act of incest with his mother, and it so filled him with hatred for mankind that from *sammā-saṁbodhi* he diverted his efforts to *pacceka-saṁbodhi*. The fruitless task of teaching depraved creatures like men no longer inspired him: he would seek enlightenment for self alone.[29] So 'like a rhinoceros' he roamed alone.

The Lord of Buddhist faith is unlike this royal self-serving Buddha: he is saviour of mankind like Lord Kṛṣṇa of the *Gītā* who absolves from their sins all men who take refuge in him.[30] The *Karuṇā* attribute of the Lord is insisted upon: he is described as *kāruṇiko* (compassionate), *lokahito* (living for the welfare of humanity), *lokanukampo* (sympathetic

[26] Kv, XVIII, 3.

[27] *Puggala-paññatti*, IX, I and VI, I. The two types are distinguished with regard to their qualities also in *Milinda*, IV, I, 25–26.

[28] No. XX in *Div.*

[29] Div, pp. 293–294: 'Ka utsāha īdriśānāṁ sattvānām 'arthāya bodhicaryaṁ carituṁ yannāhaṁ svēke kārye pratipadyoyam'.

So thinking he went in for Pratyeka Buddhahood: 'pratyebāṁ bodhim-adhigatavān'

[30] See *supra*, p. 200: 'Ahaṁ tvāṁ sarvapāpabhyo mokṣāyiṣyāmi mā śucal'.

towards humanity) and *lokatthacāro* (bent on doing good to humanity).[31]

* * * * *

The co-existence in Buddhism of two cults—a Buddha-cult that is articulate and inculcates self-exertion for *Dhamma* on the devotee's part, the single-minded pursuit of *Sīla* (Righteousness), *Samādhi* (Earnest thought or Meditation), *Paññā* (Wisdom) and *Vimutti* (Freedom),[32]—and a nascent *Bhagavā* or *Bhakti-cult* that recommends the substitution of all self-exertion by complete reliance on the Lord's saving grace and the invocation of it by prayer and *pūjā*,—is a somewhat intriguing phenomenon. The two cults never completely fused, but remained like two strains in Buddhism—one cherished and developed by the Theravāda and the other passing over into the non-Theravāda schools.

An anomaly of this character in a system of religion always suggests the intrusion of some extraneous influence: the influence in this case is likeliest from the more ancient and pre-Buddhistic *Bhāgavata* cult. The antiquity of origin of this cult rests on the identification of its founder with a certain hermit-sage (*Ṛṣi*) of the Upaniṣadic age whose apotheosis is one of many instances of euhemerism in Indian mythology.

Its scripture, however, comes late in time, but the existence of this cult and its following in the 1st or the 2nd century B.C. is attested by an interesting lithic inscription left by a Greek, named Heliodoras, son of Dion, who was sent from Taxila, then capital of a frontier Greek State, as envoy to the court of an Indian Prince in Central India. This Greek official, who set up his embassy in the ancient city of Vidiśā, had embraced an Indian faith, and, as an act of piety, he erected a sacred monolith at Vidiśā and decorated it with a couple of verses from the *Mahābhārata*. In the epigraph he describes himself, after noting his name, parentage and race, as a *Bhāgavata*.[33]

The principal scripture of the *Bhāgavata* cult, called the

[31] Kv, XVIII, 3 (P. of C., p. 326).
[32] They are laid down as the 'dhamma' of Gotama in MahaP., IV, 3.
[33] See Ep. Ind., Vol. X, Appendix, p. 63.

Bhagavad-Gītā, is an inset in the sacred epic from which Heliodoras quotes : it is supposed to have been orally delivered by Lord Kṛṣṇa from the charioteer's seat to Arjuna, the protagonist on the Pāndava side, on the eve of the Kurukṣetra battle, the theme of the epic. Kṛṣṇa is accepted in tradition as the divine founder of the *Bhāgavata* cult : he is the central figure of a whole cycle of legends about him contributed by successive ages. But, as Hopkins points out, " the simple original view of Kṛṣṇa is that he is a god, the son of Devakī ".[34]

The metronymic serves as a clue, making it possible for us to recognise behind the cultish deification a sage of dim antiquity mentioned in one of the earlier pre-Buddhistic *Upaniṣads* by the same name and metronymic—as Kṛṣṇa, son of Devakī (*Devakīputra*) '.[35] He is said to have been the disciple of a seer named Ghora Āṅgirasa, and a certain doctrine is also said to have been received by Kṛṣṇa from his preceptor. The doctrine is stated in the *Upaniṣad* in cryptic terms, but, curiously enough, it holds in the germ the whole philosophy of immortality of the soul expounded in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.[36] The tradition of the existence in antiquity of a great seer (*Ṛṣi*) named Kṛṣṇa (Pali Kaṇha) is recorded also in a Buddhist legend.[37]

The probable identification of the Kṛṣṇa of the *Upaniṣad* with the founder of the *Bhāgavata* cult makes its growth and development synchronous with the early development of Buddhism in the 5th, 4th and 3rd centuries B.C.

Buddhism, being a popular and proselytising religion could scarcely have avoided contact with or influence from other modes or systems of faith, particularly through influx of converts who are always apt to carry into their new faith traces of the old. In any case the grand concept which first appears in Buddhism in the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta* of an

[34] *The Religions of India*, p. 467.

[35] ChU, III, 17. For indentification of the Kṛṣṇa of the *Upaniṣad* with the founder of the *Bhāgavata* Cult, see HVS, pp. 38 ff.

[36] See ChU, III, 17, 5–6 and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, Ch. II, vv. 17–25.

In the *Upaniṣad*, Āṅgirasa gives to Kṛṣṇa a mystic formula which contains the truth about the imperishability of the soul.

In ChU. III, 17, 6, Āṅgiras is represented as imparting to Kṛṣṇa the mystic formula which contains the truth about the immortality of the soul.

[37] Ambaṭṭha Suttanta, DN (see Dial, i, p. 119—' That Kaṇha was a mighty seer ').

eternal Wisdom-Being manifesting himself in successive æons (*kappa*) in incarnate human form seems to be an exact Buddhist counterpart of the 'Incarnation Doctrine' (*Avatārā-vāda*) of the *Bhāgavata* cult.

Appearing first in the *Mahābhārata* epic (Book XII, entitled *Nārāyaṇīya* section), the doctrine is formulated later in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. The Lord (of the *Bhāgavata* cult), according to this doctrine, is unborn, imperishable in essence and sovereign over all created beings. Yet he is impelled to take human births, because in his divine nature there exists a subtle urge, mystically named *Ātma-māyā* (translated as 'illusory self'),[38] and, he incarnates himself, as Lord Kṛṣṇa proclaims in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, with the object of bringing about 'the salvation of the pious, the destruction of evil-doers and the stabilization of Dhamma'.[39]

Spoken on the battle-field of Kurukṣetra from Arjuna's war-chariot, the words of Lord Kṛṣṇa seem to take on a martial note. The note, in the Buddhist expression of *Avatāra-vāda*, is differently modulated; it is softened and subdued to *Karuṇā* and the motive of incarnation is expressed as pure *Lokatthacāra* (Welfare of Humanity). But, common to both the Buddhist canon and the Bhāgavata scripture, is the idea of the Saviour Lord. In the endless flux of cosmic life, he appears from age to age to rescue the poor, the helpless and the drowning. The expression of the idea in the two cults have shades of difference which exclude the notion of borrowing,[40] and the compassion motive of the Lord is in Buddhism more definitely articulated, more iteratively stressed.

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[38] *Bhagavad-Gītā*, Ch. IV, v. 6: 'Prkṛtiṁ svām' adhiṣṭhāya sambham' ātmamāyayā.'

[39] *Ibid.*, Ch. IV, 8—'Paritrāṇāya sādhūnāṁ vināśāya ca duṣkritām; Dharmasaṁsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge'.

[40] Rai Chaudhuri's account of the influence of the *Bhakti* Cult on Buddhism (see HVS, pp. 73–76) seems to be based on the theory of borrowing. But the truth seems to be that some of the fluid ideas which crystallized later in the *Bhakti* Cult were inherited by Buddhism even before the *Bhakti* Cult itself had formed. It is not only in the Mahāyāna (which stage only of Buddhism is taken by Rai Chaudhuri), but also in the Hīnayāna, as I have shown, that the *Bhakti* element is to be found. It must have been introduced into Buddhism much earlier than Rai Chaudhuri supposes.

Bhakti is definitely one of the ingredient elements of Buddhism. But it was perhaps not self-evolved from within the religion, but contributed to it by the *Bhāgavata* cult at some early stage when Buddhism was still unformed and fluid. In the Theravāda, as we have observed[41], it was treated as more or less foreign, though *Bhakti* had come into the religion early, shaping its *Ti-saraṇa*, formula, making of the Lord a ' saviour ' and initiating prayer and propitiation, and generally becoming incorporate with the faith.

In the Theravāda system the place of *Bhakti* is limited,but in other schools it has a larger recognition and stronger emphasis. Slowly strengthening in the Buddhist faith, it eventually won for itself, as evidenced by the latest books of the canon, an ampler place even in the Theravāda, though perhaps not affecting the monk-mind so deeply as the minds of common lay Buddhists.

* * * * *

When *stūpa*-worship became an institution of Buddhism, the *Bhakti* of the Buddhist found an organ of expression, a release and outlet. In this mode of worship, it is the ' Lord of Compassion ', the giver and saviour, rather than the ' Enlightened One ', the teacher, guide and path-finder, who is invoked.

What the folk mind conceived to be the ' fruit ' of the worship appears from a set of verses quoted in the *Mahāvastu*.

Couched in a kind of broken and mixed Sanskrit, these verses bear *prima facie* evidence of their folk origin as well as of their antiquity ; they may hark back to the peak period of popularity of *stūpa*-worship. Their significance can be missed by none who has watched intelligently the form and ceremony of a folk worship in an Indian village in which the 'fruits' (*phala*) of the performance are told by the priest in winding up the ceremony ; they are both spiritual and secular benefits of all sorts. The verses in the *Mahāvastu*, in which similar benefits are told as accruing from mere circumambulation of a *stūpa*, may have been an ancient recitative of *stūpa*-worshippers, chanted as they went round by the

[41] See *supra*, pp. 198–199.

'circumambulatory path' (*pradakṣiṇapatha*), bearing incense and flower-offerings in their hands.[42]

It is evident that, as the cult-object of *stūpa*-worship changed from a remembered Teacher to a 'Lord of Compassion', the devotee's attitude of mind towards the object also changed. From the divine object of adoration, it was not 'enlightenment' now, but salvation, that was sought, besides secular benefits of all kinds.

In the sculptured representations of the holy legends, the spirit of this worship is sometimes finely caught and rendered. The legends tell the Buddha-story with the Birth, the Renunciation, the Turning of the Wheel and the Great Decease as the momentous connecting events. But art, by simply omitting the central figure of the legend, sets forth each event as emblematic in its nature, conveying only the intangible glory of him who, not involved as an actor in the scene, chose through it just to express and manifest himself so. By the absence of the Buddha-figure, the human relations are cut off, as well as relations of time and space, which in the texts of the legends constitute their main significance and appeal.

Perhaps the finest illustration of how the spirit of a legend is transmuted by the artist's omission from it of the central Buddha-figure is afforded by one of the medallions of Bārhut.[43] It represents the legend of Anāthapiṇḍada's purchase of the site of the great Jetavana monastery. Competing with a prince for the site, this merchant of Sāvatthi is said to have covered the whole area with pieces of silver and offered the amount as price. After this extraordinarily expensive purchase, he made a gift of the site to the Lord and, as the legend relates, received his thanks and benediction in return.[44] In the sculptured representation, however, the Lord, as usual and conventional in this art, is absent from the scene:

[42] Mhu., II, pp. 362–364:

'Bodhāya cittaṁ nāmetvā hitāya śarvaprāṇināṁ
Ya'stūpaṁ lokanāthasya karoti abhipradakṣiṇam;
Smṛtīmanto matīmanto puṇyavanto viśārado
Bhoti sarvatra jātiṣu caranto Bodhicārikām'—

so on through a long succession of verses in ungrammatical and corrupt Sanskrit.

[43] See Barhut, Book III, Plate KLV.

[44] Culla, VI, 9, 2 (VT, iii, p. 198).

Anāthapiṇḍada stands in the extreme left of the medallion with folded hands before the *invisible Buddha.* No human link between the donor and the donee remains and the gift becomes not a gift but an act of worship.

From the purely human conception of the legend to its reconception by art, the change is a palpable one and any Indian will recognize at a glance the urge behind the change. The artist's individual religious experience,—the Buddhism of his own time as he himself felt and held it,—has come in to interfere with the pure motive of art. The legend to be visualized has got transformed in his spiritual awareness, assuming a different aspect in the representation: the Gift has become Worship.

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In this spirit of worship that supervened in the religion, the trend is palpable towards the Mahāyāna development in the next following age when, in the apt summing up of Dr. Pratt, Buddhism becomes "less a continuation of the teachings of the Buddha than a collection of teachings about him".[45]

But it is to the teachings of the Lord and the 'good doctrines' derived from them that the Theravāda clings.

We shall deal in the next chapter with the great polemical work *Kathāvatthu,* which may be assigned to the second century B.C. when *Bhakti* has already asserted its primacy in the faith, *stūpa*-worship is at the peak of popularity and a new phase of development in the religion is from many points visible.

The Theravāda protagonist in the *Kathāvatthu* closes fast against impending change all the shutters of his mind. He frowns on the idea as a heresy that in the *sāsana* there can happen anything new.[46] "In what respect", he asks, "is the religion susceptible of reform or renovation?" and proceeds to take one by one, in the orthodox 'particularising method', the fundamental doctrines as they are technically named,—(i) *Satipaṭṭhāna* (Mindfulness), (ii) *Sammāppadhāna* (Right Exertion), (iii) *Iddhipāda* (Psychic Concentration), (iv) *Indriya* (Controls), (v) *Bala* (Cultivation of Inner Forces),

[45] *Pilgrimage of Buddhism,* p. 262.
[46] 'Sāsanaṁ navakatan hi'—Kv, XXI, I.

and (vi) *Bhojjhaṅga* (Constituents of Wisdom).[47] After this enumeration, the Theravāda professor asks challengingly—" Which of these ancient doctrines has been or can be modified ? " He clinches the question with the dogmatic assertion that, so long as ' the good doctrines are not upset as being evil and the evil ones not recommended as being good ', there can arise no question of renovating the *Sāsana*.

The mental limitation of the high-brow cleric is all too evident. To him the *Sāsana* is a closed book ; its doctrines and categories of thought are unassailable, and whatever is inconsistent with them is plain heresy. He would make religion a matter of doctrines and dogmas, but it is really in that, of which he betrays little sense or awareness, viz., the Spirit of the Religion, that the vital change has set in.

[47] These doctrines belong to Buddhist psychological philosophy and are summed up in a category in MahaP, III, 65 and elsewhere in the canon. See also *supra*, p. 115.

PART IV

THE OLD CULT IN CRUCIBLE

XV

THE HERESIES

THE THERAVĀDA dogma is that the *Sāsana* of the Lord is a fixed and static system, admitting of no reform, incapable of 'being made new' (*navakata*).[1]

It is grounded on the orthodox theory that all the doctrines and all the rules of the religion were laid down finally in the *Buddha-vacana* (Word of the Buddha), that is, in the discourses and dialogues reported in the canon. The fact, as we know, was otherwise: the discourses in their legendary frame were composed by monks of several generations, of whom the first generation alone could possibly have inherited genuine traditions of the Lord's teachings.

While the legends were being made by the monks and doctrines fashioned in their *abhidhamma-kathās*, the religion put forth new *nuances* and the faith itself was being slowly transformed. Even in the canonical books of the Theravāda the process betrays itself by fits and starts. The Buddha-concept is not constant, but shows variations; the doctrines are not of the same stratum of development; and in the latest books of the canon,—the 'poetical manuals'—the ferment is felt of a resurgent *Bhakti*-cult and its ritualism of prayer (*vandana*) and worship (*pūjā*).[2] But there is a fundamental system of faith and doctrine in the school, supposed to have been settled by the *Thera* founders for all time. To this the conservative Theravāda clings as the rock of ages, pronouncing as 'heretical' all notions that do not belong to or will not fit in with it.

In the canon itself, there is record of only one defection from the *Sāsana*,—that of the Vajji monks of Vesāli,—which is supposed to have failed. In the ancient commentaries on the canon, however, as well as in the Ceylonese chronicles as we have noticed,[3] as many as eighteen schools are mentioned

[1] See *supra*, p. 210, fn. 46.
[2] See *supra*, pp. 201–202.
[3] See *supra*, p. 128.

as coming into existence within two centuries of the Lord's decease. It brings us near the reign of Asoka. The Theravāda tradition is that in the reign of that Emperor heretics had wormed themselves into the *Sangha* in such large numbers that a purge became necessary and was actually carried out under imperial authority by Moggaliputta Tissa, though the omission of any allusion to such an event in any of the edicts of the Emperor makes the truth of the tradition doubtful.

To this Moggaliputta Tissa and the supposed occasion of the purge, a polemical work is ascribed by another tradition which the *Dīpavaṁsa* records.[4]

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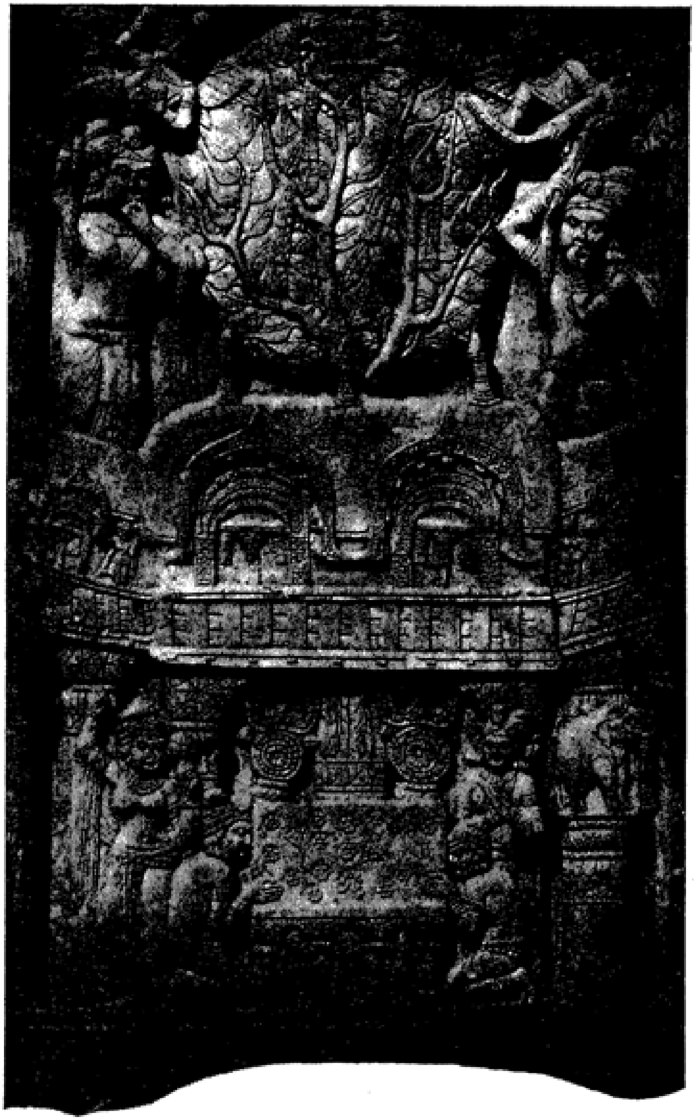
This work has the title, *Kathāvatthu* (Issues of *Kathās* or Doctrinal Debates), to which we have made a passing reference earlier.[5] Its express object is to refute current 'heresies', that is, doctrines, dogmas and notions which are inconsistent with the Theravāda. Quite aside, however, from the author's intent, its importance to us lies in the fact that it gives us a rare glimpse into the workings of the unorthodox or free-thinking Buddhist mind of the age. We are made aware by its contents and its polemics of the slow shifting of the religion from its ancient moorings,—of departures from doctrinal positions the Theravāda seeks to fix and stabilise and advances towards new positions.

The relative strength of 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy' in the progress and development of Buddhism is perhaps impossible for us to assess, but 'heresy' undoubtedly represented the dynamic principle.

Being a canonical work, it has received a commentary. The commentator, living six or seven centuries late and in a region (Ceylon) far away from where the work itself originated, assigns the 'heresies' out of vague traditional knowledge to different schools, named by him, in some instances definitely and in others only in terms of vague generality. The scrutiny

[4] The tradition is recorded thus in the Dīpavaṁsa, 7, 40–41—"Wise Moggaliputta, the destroyer of the schismatic doctrines, firmly established the Theravāda and held the Third Council. Having destroyed the different (heretical) doctrines and subdued many shameless people and restored splendour to the (true)fai th, he proclaimed (the Treatise) called '*Kathāvatthu*'."

[5] *Supra*, p. 210.



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

THE UNSEEN PRESENCE

(Celestials with fingers on lips commanding silence at the meditation under the Bodhi Tree and silent worship at the unoccupied seat of the Lord)



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

ANĀTHAPIṆḌADA'S DEDICATION OF JETAVANA
(The Gift is Worship)

of modern scholarship, however, has exposed the 'patchwork quilt' character of the work,[6]—of its having been gradually put together and subsequently finalised.

It bears marks of having grown by accretion from different hands. They are undifferentiable, however, by the test of style: this test being precluded by the extremely rigid condensation and syllogistic form in which each article is cast in the doctrinal groups (*vaggas*) passed in review. Perhaps the work was carried on piecemeal and over a long period, even a century. The contents, however, belong to a stratum of Buddhist development which could not have been reached prior to the beginnings of the Asokan age (270–50 B.C.), and it is round the middle of that age that the work may be dated.

From the *Kathāvatthu*, it would be perfectly evident that, outside the Theravāda, a mass of doctrines, beliefs and practices had grown up which appeared to challenge its own system and had to be beaten back by the school even out of the sheer necessity for self-preservation. The characteristic tone and temper of the work stem from this resistant attitude, —of orthodoxy pitted against the mushrooming heresies of the age. The *Kathāvatthu* is not an academic contribution to *Abhidhamma* learning, but severely practical in its aim and object, and this fact lends it importance as a document of great significance in the history of Buddhist development.

A polemical work of this character, the object of which was the refutation of heresies, would scarcely have been conceived or commenced unless (i) heterodoxies had gathered strength, (ii) there was danger of the true Theravāda being swamped by them, and (iii) there was an urge to preserve and stabilize its orthodox standpoint in the religion.

* * * * *

Those who first started on this work must have sensed a change in the air, both in the schools of monks and among laity, and were determined, by calling back attention to

[6] Mrs. Rhys Davids says: "The truth underlying, for me, this legend (of the Buddha's drawing up the *Kathāvatthu* in anticipation of future differences) is the slow growth, by accretions, of the work itself. No work put together for a special occasion, or to meet an entirely new need, could conceivably have assumed the 'patchwork quilt' appearance of the *Kathāvatthu*" (P. of C., p. XXXI).

the old scriptural legends and the doctrines propounded therein, to check the incoming change.

To read the purpose of the *Kathāvatthu* as mere clarification of the Theravāda standpoint in doctrines,—merely to point out what opinions of other schools were heretical,—is to see only its obverse side. This is the side which its commentator holds up,—showing the Theravāda *versus* some or other particular school or sect. Almost every 'heresy' is ascribed by him to a *school* or a *sect* of Buddhists, although in so doing the vagueness of his traditionary knowledge is betrayed by the highly generalized denominations used, such as 'the monks of the north' (*Uttarapathakas*), 'the monks of Andhra' (*Andhakas*), etc. We are also left uncertain whether a particular heresy is the formulated doctrine of a school, or just an opinion or a current belief popularly held.

But it is not solely with the false doctrines of schoolmen that the work is concerned.

The majority of the heresies is undoubtedly of a technical scholastic character, such as would form the themes of *Abhidhamma-kathās* among learned monks: they were truly 'Kathāvatthu' (Issues of *Kathās*), as the work describes itself in the title. The aggregate of doctrines relating to the psycho-metaphysical problem of Personality (*Puggalavaggo*), the nature of Phenomena (*Dhammā* XXI, 7), the States of Consciousness (XXII, 3), the stages on the Path of Spiritual Culture, whether fivefold or eightfold (XX, 5)—all these belong to the sphere of monkish *abhidhamma*.

Not so are some other heresies which have a perceptibly non-scholastic air. They originated not in the learned debates of monks, in *kathās*, but grew in the humbler soil of the uncultured folk mind. The *Kathāvatthu*, in taking notice of them, shows that the Theravāda stand was not against heretical doctrines of other schools only, but against popular superstitions, against 'pseudodoxia epidemica', as well,—in other words, against all the forces that were trying to wrest the religion away from the presumed truth of Theravāda doctrines. In that era the stand was perhaps felt to be necessary.

A typical instance is the refutation of the belief that even the excreta of the Buddha smelt fragrant (XVIII). It is

laughed at and dismissed with this humorous taunt: "This would imply that the Exalted One fed on perfumes. But you admit that he fed only on rice-gruel . . . Moreover, if your proposition be true, some would have used them for toilet, gathering them, saving them in baskets and boxes, exposing them in the bazaar, making cosmetics of them. But nothing of the sort was done".[7] The commentator observes: "Out of an indiscriminate affection for the Exalted Buddha, some, for instance certain of the Andhakas and the Uttarapathakas, hold that even the excreta of the Exalted One excelled all other odorous things".[8]

With a little deeper probing into this phenomenon of 'indiscriminate affection', we touch the core of it in *Bhakti* which has quickened in the religion to a free emotion and impulse, no longer to be circumscribed within the four corners of the canonical *Mahāpurisa* concept of the Lord, apt also to run to crude and absurd excesses. If *Bhakti* so affected the monk-mind, among laity it must have been even more common and wide-spread.

Other heresies point clearly in the direction of docetic speculation, e.g., that the Buddha never lived on earth, that his daily usage was supramundane, that he taught his *dhamma* by proxy only, etc.[9] The dogma of plural Buddhas had, as we have seen, already established itself in Buddhism, but whether the Buddhas differed in grades or were of the same grade became a point of controversy among monks (XXI, 5), though, as indicated by the 'enlightenment trees' on the Bārhut stones, the Buddhas seem apparently to have been conceived by common people as being 'of the same grade'.[10] But the most significant 'heresy' of all is that the *sāsana* can be renovated (XXI, 1): it almost seems to suggest actual existence of a feeling that the old forms of faith Theravāda sought to perpetuate were obsolescent.

What the original projectors of the *Kathāvatthu* had in mind would thus appear to be something more than a scholastic purpose,—not simply to establish doctrines, but to fight back all forms of thought or notion, opinion or belief, feeling or

[7] P. of C., p. 326.
[8] DC., p. 213.
[9] See P. of C., p. XIV.
[10] See *supra*, p. 190.

emotion, that tended, in their view, to wrest the *sāsana* away from its pristine truth and purity.

It was on the scriptural legends of its canon that the Theravāda took its stand. The insistence is on the truth and reality of these legends in every instance in the refutation of heresies.

* * * * *

The test of the propriety of a doctrine or opinion is taken to be its accordance with the *literal* truth of the holy legends, as the following examples illustrate:

The 'heresy' (evidently born of a docetic concept of the Lord) is—That the Buddhas exist in all directions.[11] The Theravāda protagonist asks: How then is the Buddha of each different direction,—east, west, north or south,—and of each celestial region to be named? "What is his family? his clan? What are the names of his parents? or of his pair of elect disciples? or of his body servant? What sort of rainment or bowl does he bear? and in what village, town, city, kingdom or country?"[12]: The argument is obviously based on the silence of the legends on these points except with regard to only one of the Buddhas,—Gotama who was born at Lumbinī and whose parents were Suddhodana and Māyā. To the Theravādin, no Buddha could be conceived without these human and earthly relations. Again the 'heresy' is—That his usage (e.g., speech) was supramundane.[13] "But", asks the Theravāda protagonist, "were there not men who heard his everyday speech,—ravished or offended or baffled by it,—men of all sorts, wise and foolish?"[14] The legends are indeed replete with instances where the Lord delivers his discourse to or holds dialogue with common folk whose spontaneous reactions are noted and reported. He blinks the fact that, in the conception of the age, the Buddha was not the *Satthā* of the legends, but the supernal Buddha of the *Mahāpadāna*,—and, as a corollary to that concept, a doctrine, half-baked yet, but fully formed in later Mahāyāna Buddhism, had grown up that the *Dhamma* had been taught

[11] Kv., XXI, 6—Sabbā disā Buddhā tiṭṭhantīti.
[12] P. of C., p. 355.
[13] Kv., II, 10—'Buddhassa bhagavatā vohāro lokuttaro.'
[14] P. of C., pp. 134–136.

by him not in person, but by a specially created body, and his chief disciple, Ananda, was supposed to be the inheritor of this body.[15] As going against the manifest evidence of the legends, it is condemned as heretical.

Docetism was already on the horizon. Long before it was noted for refutation in the *Kathāvatthu*, it had been born and been slowly growing,—and from the same roots as docetism in Christianity,[16] viz., the sense that spirit and matter were opposed and the idea that matter defiled spirit and that the Divine Spirit must needs, therefore, be transcendent over matter. The belief had emerged that the 'Buddha never existed in the world of men.'[17] The commentator observes that it originated from a loose grasp of the *sutta* which says: "The Exalted One was born in the world but dwelt, having overcome the world, undefiled by the world".[18]

It is easy to see how the growth of doceticism was cutting the ground insidiously from under the feet of the Theravāda, falsifying its basic concept of the *Dhamma* as the Lord's teachings recorded in the legends. The legends themselves had already acquired 'holiness', and a Buddhist was bound in terms of his faith to believe in their truth. But we shall observe in the next chapter how this bondage of faith was shuffled off by the docetists by reading into the legends a new meaning,—what they called *paramārtha* ('real meaning') as distinguished from *laukikārtha* ('apparent or popular meaning'),—without actually challenging the truth of the legends.

But the Theravāda opponent insists on the face-value and literal truth of the legends: to him they are susceptible of no dual meaning. In the face of what seemed to him intellectual sophistication and mental obscurantism, he flings the slogan—Back to the plain meaning of the Legends.

Yet the plain meaning was plain no longer: it had received the touch of metaphysics and mysticism. The entire Buddha-

[15] Kv., XVIII, 2—'Abhinimmitena desito ti'.

[16] See *Doceticism* in ERE.—"In Christianity doceticism is the corollary of Gnostic dualism, ultimately traceable to old Persian philosophy. It is the consequence of the representation of matter as evil which is the common element of the Gnostic Schools."

[17] Kv., XVIII, I—'No vattabbaṁ Buddho Bhagavā manussaloke addhāsiti.'

[18] SN, iii, p. 140—See DC., p. 211.

story of the legends, from the Holy Nativity to the Great Decease, stood re-oriented to a Buddha-concept alien from the one the Theravāda protagonist tries passionately to recall in the challenging questions: "Was he not born at Lumbinī and did he not receive perfect enlightenment under the Bodhi tree? Was not the Wheel of the Dhamma set rolling by him at Banaras? Did he not renounce the will to live at Cāpāla Cetiya? Did he not complete existence at Kusinārā?".[19] In the same tenor did Nāgasena meet the sceptic doubt of King Milinda that the Buddha never existed on earth.[20]

[19] See *supra*, p. 14.
[20] See Milinda, p. 70—QM, i, p. 109.

XVI

THE OLD LEGENDS IN NEW LIGHT

WE HAVE seen how the Buddha-concept of the Theravāda centres in the humanity of the Lord and how it informs nearly all the legends of its canon. But, incongruously enough, the canon finds place for a *suttanta* in which a wholly irreconcilable concept appears,—one in which the Superman has shed his humanity and stands as an 'eternal Being'. We have already discussed this *suttanta* (*Mahāpadāna*). But whence its central concept was derived and how it came to be incorporated in the canon are problems, yet unsolved, posed by it.

In the background of the Superman legends, there undoubtedly lay the tradition of an earthly Teacher, a *Satthā*, but the 'eternal Being' of the *Mahāpadāna* is unlinked to any tradition: he is a purely subjective and theological concept, whose likeness to the concept of Lord Kṛṣṇa of the Bhāgavata cult is certainly suggestive. It was very early in the evolution of Buddhism,—even at its earliest formative stage,—that the concept seems to have arisen. Among the primitive Buddhists, there must have been many who leaned to that concept: they were the pioneers, about three or four centuries ahead, before the rise of sectarianism in the religion, of the Mahāyānist development of a later age.

It is evident, however, that the theological *Mahāpadāna* concept gained ground and came to the fore. We observe its influence on the legends of the Theravāda canon in their reference to plural 'Buddhas', to the Lord's mixing in 'celestial assemblies' as well as to the doctrine of *Dhammatā*.[1] It did not remain confined to monkish thought and speculation: Emperor Asoka himself subscribed to the concept and its subtle pressure is borne by the *stūpa*-art of Asokan age.[2]

[1] See pp. 224–225 *infra* and pp. 193–194 *supra*.
[2] See *supra*, pp. 187, 190 ff.

Round the middle of the 2nd century B.C., it seems to have grown into a dogma.

Since the concept took hold of the Buddhist mind, the old scriptural legends must have presented a difficulty to faith.

They pointed to a human and temporal Buddha, not an eternal one; they told the Buddha-life in terms of a human career, but, with the Buddha-personality transfigured in faith, the legends could no longer be accepted in their strict literal sense on which the Theravāda in its die-hard conservatism insisted.

The need arose for a theoretic reconcilement between the legends, already grown ancient and of scriptural sanctity and authority, and the new Buddha-concept arisen on the horizon. We can trace the attempts made by scholastic and clerical Buddhism at this reconcilement in the evolution of three different metaphysical theories which underlie respectively the presentation of the Buddha-life in three outstanding works, assignable in their oldest and original versions, to a pre-Mahāyāna period, probably near the end of the Asokan age. The keywords of the theories are *Dhammatā* (Spiritual Order), *Lalita* (Divine Sport) and *Upāya-kauśala* (Skilfulness of Device) respectively.

* * * * *

The theory of *Dhammatā* is of the Theravāda school, representing the earliest attempt to re-orient the legends to the changed Buddha-concept. Appearing for the first time in the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta*, it is taken up in the Mahāyāna development of Buddhism and enlarged upon (vide *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*). The theory draws upon the old legends, in which a human *Satthā* is posited, to build up the frame-work for a Buddha, superhuman and immutable.

The inner logic of the theory is that since the Buddha, re-conceived as an 'eternal Being,'[3] is not bound by time, the manner of his earthly manifestation must also be timeless: it must be a pattern, not a career. Every incident of this

[3] Cf. Rhys Davids' remarks on the Buddha-concept of the *Mahāpadāna*: "But a Wisdom Being, appearing from æon to æon under similar circumstances to propound a similar faith! This is an exclusively Indian conception; in Indian literature it is mainly Buddhist (?) and in Buddhist literature its first appearance is in documents of the date of our *Suttanta* (i.e., the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta*)" (Dial, ii, p. 2).

pattern must partake of the quality of eternity, not fleeting and fugitive but capable of recurrence and renewal. What, therefore, the legends relate of the Lord's life and career from his birth at Lumbinī to his death at Kusinārā is not personal history at all: these events grew not out of an individual life, but only followed an eternal order of phenomena in the spiritual world.

The idea of a Cosmic Order is more ancient than Buddhism in Indian thought, and is conveyed in the literature of the Vedas by the term, *Ṛta*.[4] In Buddhist philosophy this Cosmic Order was conceived as fourfold,—the Order, respectively, of *Karma* (i.e., the chain of cause and effect in human life and conduct), of the Seasons (i.e., the Order of natural phenomena), of Life-germs (i.e., the process of biological evolution), and, lastly, of the Mind (i.e., the order of psychological processes).

Projecting into the higher spiritual plane, this Cosmic Order becomes identical with *Dhamma* and the Order of the *Dhamma* is expressed by the term, *Dhammatā*. The author of the *Mahāpadāna* takes the Buddha-legends of the scripture as only typical illustrations of *Dhammatā*; they are impersonal, and their incidents are immutable, pre-determined by the Spiritual Order. The truth of the legendary incidents is thus admitted, but it is held to be absolute and not relative to a person,—holding good not in the instance of a single life only, but capable of recurrence in exactly the same form, sequence and fashion through time and eternity.

We have noticed how the author of the *Mahāpadāna* mentions each circumstance of the holy nativity as *Dhammatā*; at the same time he reproduces the events of the Lord's career as set down in the legends, repetitively in successive Buddha-lives from Vipassī to Gotama.[6]

* * * * *

It is in the Theravāda school that the theory of *Dhammatā* seems to have originated. In the Sarvāstivāda, a different theory, but having the same object of reconciling the legends

[4] See S.E. Dict. under *Ṛta*.
[5] This is taken from the canonical commentary (on *Dhammatā* in Mahapad). See Dial, ii, pp. 8–9, footnote.
[6] See *supra*, pp. 188–189.

with the Eternal Buddha, seems to have prevailed. It informs the principal scripture of that school, the *Lalitavistara* (Delineation of the Lord's Sports) in which the legends are worked up into an epic narrative, commencing from the Lord's pre-natal existence in Blissful (*Tuṣita*) Heaven and ending with his attainment of *Sammā-saṁbodhi*. The work, originally of single authorship,[7] shows clear marks of having been extensively remoulded, edited and pressed into the trappings of developed Mahāyāna doctrines. But the Buddha-legends worked up into its theme are evidently drawn from the same ancient traditional stock as those of the Pali Theravāda canon.[8]

The legends, in its view, are not false,—and this is especially emphasized with reference to the miracles of the Lord's nativity,[9]—only they do not represent reality in the ordinary human sense. Those who have faith (*śraddhā*) in the Tathāgata, it is said, are his 'friends' and, when they relate these legends about him they are 'speakers of actual happenings in the past' (*bhūtavādin*) and not of falsehoods (*mṛṣāvādin*).[10] But all that happened in the Lord's life was not, as the Theravāda held, predeterminded by cosmic law or spiritual order, but proceeded out of the Lord's free will and desire to express himself so.

Stripped of rhetorical embroidery, the legends of the *Lalitavistara* are the same in substance as those of the Pali canon, yet with a subtle conceptual difference.

The Pali legends unfold a career and a developing personality,—the Lord's gay and luxurious youth as the Sākya prince, the spiritual crisis in his life leading to the Renunciation, the attainment of Enlightenment, the foundation of the Order and the missionary labours, all rounded off by the Great Decease at Kusinārā. It is essentially the picture of

[7] The original of the *Lalitavistara* most probably emanated from a single author. He was perhaps a monk living at or near Kapilāvastu or had been to that place on a visit. While describing two incidents,—the taking on of the saffron robe by Gotama and the throwing away of her ornaments by Gotama's aunt, Mahāprajāpati, in grief, the author says that an existing *caitya* commemorates the former and a pond the latter and that 'they may be seen in Kapilāvastu even to-day' (Lal, pp. 226 and 229).

[8] See IHQ., 1940, pp. 230 ff. (*The Lalitavistara and Sarvāstivāda* by E. J. Thomas).

[9] See *Ibid* about the nativity legends in the *Lalitavistara*.

[10] Lal, p. 91: 'Tāni ca tathāgatasya mitrāṇi bhūtavādino na mṛṣāvādinaḥ'.

a man evolving through living experience. But the hero of the life-drama of the *Lalitavistara* remains the same, static and immutable in character and personality throughout, an Eternal Being of Blissful Heaven,—and all his action on the stage of the world is but his " sport " (*lalita*).

The " sport " idea is not explicitly worked out, but is carried on fitfully with abrupt hints and suggestions in a word or a phrase, until towards the end of the work it is disclosed that the *suttanta*, called the *Lalitavistara*, represents the ' play ' (*vikrīḍita*) of the Lord, thus clearing up the significance of the title.[11]

In the narration of the Buddha-story, the idea insinuates itself in various subtle ways: it runs like an invisible thread through all its epic imagery and romantic extravaganza.

The boy Buddha is sent to school, but not for any need for training. The schoolmaster prostrates himself before the divine pupil; all knowledge is already mastered by him and every letter of the alphabet is to him the sign for a maxim of wisdom,[12] and for him learning is only ' to conform to worldly practice '.[13] The old legend of the Four Signs,—the young prince's successive encounters with an aged man, a sick man, a dead man and a religious mendicant,—is reproduced, but there is the significant addition to each of these incidents of one word, ' *Jānan* ' (' although he knew '),[14] implying that it was not these experiences that produced in him the realization of *Dukkha* (Sorrow), but that it had already been in the omniscient mind: the incidents were therefore gone through ' in sport '. The great fight against Māra and his ilk under the Bodhi tree,—a strange fantastic battle prolonged through one whole chapter,[15]—has no reality at all, the issue not hanging for a moment in the balance, and it is actually introduced with the odd undramatic statement that the hero went through it all just to display his ' leonine sport ' (*siṁha-vikrīḍitam*).[16]

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 438: ' Lalitavistaro nāma dharmaparyāyasūtrānto mahāvaipulya Bodhisattva-vikrīḍitaḥ '.

[12] *Ibid* pp. 123–128

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 126:
' Āścaryaṁ śuddhasatvasya loke lokānuvartino;
Śikṣitaḥ sarvaśāstreṣu lipiśālam 'upagataḥ '.

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 188, 189, 190, 191.

[15] *Ibid.*, 21st chapter on *Māra-dharṣaṇa*.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 300.

The biographical setting is the same as in the Pali canon, but the inner Buddha-concept is widely divergent. The Eternal, the Omniscient and the Omnipotent goes through a human career on earth, not under the necessity of the law of *Dhammatā*, but in an inscrutable impulse of divine sportiveness.

Closely akin is the Vaiṣṇavite idea that God is 'full of sport' (*Līlāmaya*), in conformity with which the legendary incidents of the life of Lord Kṛṣṇa are delineated as his sports (*līlā*) in a late, but leading Vaiṣṇava scripture, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*. The Buddhist term, *Lalita*, is only a variant of the Vaiṣṇava *Līlā*. It is difficult to trace back the idea of 'divine sport' in Indian religious thought, and to determine whether both Buddhism and Vaiṣṇavism inherited it from a common source or whether there was borrowing on any side between them.

* * * * *

Besides *Dhammatā* and *Lalita*, a third theory was evolved and later developed into one of the fundamental doctrines of the Mahāyāna. But we find it in a somewhat fluid condition yet.

Technically called *Upāya-kauśala* (literally, 'skilfulness of device'), it is taken as one of the attributes of the Lord in the Mahāyāna system of thought, as one of his 'perfections' (*pāramitā*).[17] The old scriptural legends, according to this theory, only illustrate the Lord's 'devices',—the skilful ways by which the Eternal One, dwelling 'far in the Unapparent', in the midst of 'blissful heaven', made himself actually tangible and accessible to humanity.

Upāya-kauśala is a complex notion, growing perhaps from roots in some of the earlier 'heretical' speculations, noticed in the *Kathāvatthu*.

We have seen how the stress on the Compassion (*Karuṇā*) attribute of the Lord steadily increased with the waxing of the *Bhakti* element in Buddhism until in the Mahāyāna its high water-mark seems touched.[18] The forms in which the

[17] As in the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*, a late Mahāyāna work (AMB, p. 12).

[18] Dr. Har Dayal remarks: "It (the word, *Karuṇā*) is mentioned in an enormous number of passages in all the principal (Mahāyāna) treatises. It is perhaps the word which occurs most frequently in Mahāyānist literature" (*The Bodhisatta Doctrine*, p. 178). About *Karuṇā* as an attribute of the Lord, see *supra*, pp. 203–204.

Lord's compassion to mankind was expressed were of course the forms of his activity as described in the holy legends. But such forms needed and presupposed physical existence and human frame. The Lord had been described as a Yogin in the legends,[19] and in Indian thought one of the Yogin's supernatural powers is ability to assume a body or a series of bodies at will.[20] On this conception was based the old 'heresy', noticed in the *Kathāvatthu*,[21] of the Lord's having taken on a 'specially created' (*abhinimmita*) body in Ananda's likeness.

The Yogin or Superman concept was outgrown in Buddhist thought, but the 'heresy' of the Lord's 'created body' lingered. It developed into the doctrine of *Nirmāṇa-kāya* ('self-created body' assumed by the Lord), further developed into a Threefold Body, and ultimately into the dogma that the Lord of Heaven adapts his transcendental Buddhahood to human modes of cognition by the illusory assumption of human likeness,—taking birth and dying like a mortal, speaking and teaching like an earthly teacher, showing to the world how 'enlightenment' is achieved, and otherwise making himself accessible to human understanding. It is all supposed to be the Lord's 'skilful device'—*upāya-kauśala*. It is the key-word to unlock the significance of the famous mystical Mahāyāna *sūtra*, called *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* (translated as 'The Lotus of the Good Law').

It is a curiously unfused, undesigned and conglomerate work, but with a distinct main part which presents a sort of 'mystery play' or a phantasmagoria, with the Eternal Buddha as the hero.

The fundamental doctrine of scholastic Mahāyāna Buddhology was that the Lord had a 'threefold body' (*trikāya*). It is formulated and expounded in the treatise by Aśvaghoṣa, entitled *Mahāyāna-śraddhotpatti* (The Awakening

[19] *Supra*, pp. 37–38.

[20] In an essay on *Nirmāṇakāya* (Saraswati Bhawan Studies, Banaras, 1922, Vol. I, Part I), Pundit Gopinath Kaviraj says: "It must be plainly understood that the conception (of *Nirmāṇakāya*) was a common property of all the ancient philosophical systems of India. In the *Yoga-darśana* (Yoga philosophy), for instance, the word is interpreted as a body or a series of bodies assumed at will by a Yogin who has risen above the so-called laws of Nature and learnt to command its secret forces. In the Mahāyāna Buddhism also, the word bears practically a similar sense".

[21] Kv., XVIII, 2 (*Supra*, pp. 220–221).

of Faith in the Mahāyāna), of which the original is lost, but a Chinese translation remains.[22]

The *Lotus* knows nothing of the Mahāyāna doctrine of the 'threefold body', and its substance must therefore have antedated the formulation of the doctrine,—probably it is as old as the 1st century, B.C.[23] It attempts, without reference to the *Trikāya* doctrine, to reconcile the old legends of the Tathāgata's life with the concept of the Eternal Buddha, specially in Chapters, XIV and XV, bearing the portentious titles: "The Emergence of the Bodhisattvas out of the Womb of the Earth" and "Duration of the Lifetime of the Tathāgata" respectively.[24]

The theme is introduced with a vast apocalyptic vision. Out of the earth's womb, Bodhisattvas beyond count are conjured up before the eyes of Maitreya who stands amazed and astounded, and at last ventures to ask in all innocence how all of them could possibly be the Buddha's disciples and worshippers,—for, had not the Lord left Kapilāvastu as a young prince and attained enlightenment at Gaya a little over forty years ago? The impossibility would be, as Maitreya puts it, like that of a young man claiming centurions as his sons. But the Tathāgata resolves Maitreya's doubt and explains that for countless æons has he been an omniscient Buddha, though human creatures in their ignorance hold that the Lord Sākyamuni, 'going forth' from the Sākya clan, obtained the supreme enlightenment in the *Bodhi* circle at Gaya only in recent times. 'It must not be so regarded',[25] for he is the eternally enlightened Buddha, eternally existent, though he appears rarely in the course of æons, lest his constant presence on earth should make men relax their exertions for salvation. The rareness of his appearance in his 'clever

[22] See Awakening, pp. 103–104. The bodies (*kāya*) of the Lord are *Dharma-kāya*, *Nirmāṇa-kāya* and *Sambhoga-kāya*. According to Aśvaghoṣa, the other two *kāyas* evolve out of *Dharma-kāya*. "The *Dharma-kāya*", says Aśvaghosa, "can manifest itself in various corporeal forms; matter (*rūpa*) and mind (*citta*), from the very beginning, are not a duality. Now, depending on the *Dharma-kāya*, all Tathāgatas manifest themselves in bodily forms". On '*Dharma-kāya*', see *supra*, p. 5.

[23] According to Dr. Har Dyal, "the earliest part (Chs. I to XX) may belong to the first century B.C." (*The Bodhisatta Doctrine*, p. 382).

[24] Ch. XIV: 'Bodhisattva-vivarasamudgama parivarta'; Ch. XV: 'Tathāgatāyuṣ-pramāṇa parivarta'.

[25] Sad., p. 316: 'Naivaṁ draṣṭavyam'. The words are left untranslated in *Lotus*.

device', his *upāya-kauśala*.[26] The Lord makes only a show of his Decease, his *Parinirvāṇa*, although he is never extinct.[27] It is the Tathāgata's manner of instructing mankind (*deśana-paryāya*), and when he adopts this manner of instruction, 'there is no falsehood on his part'.[28]

We come full circle to the very antithesis of the Theravāda interpretation of the Lord's life and personality. The Theravāda puts a *literal* interpretation on what the scripture says about the Lord; it seeks to trace his earthly existence in the soil of the earth[29]; it associates his career with earthly localities. The *Lotus*, not setting aside the scripture, contradicts this literalism. "Then was the Lord staying at Rājagaha on the vulture Peak" (*Viharati Bhagavā Rājagahe Gijjhakūṭe pabbate*)—sayeth the legend. But what was this Vulture Peak? In the *Lotus*, it is no terrestrial mount, but the Lord's exalted seat in some distant intangible Heaven where he sits eternally enthroned.[30]

This timeless Buddha-concept of the *Lotus* is reproduced in a later Mahāyāna work entitled *Suvarṇa-prabbāsa* (The Gleam of Gold),—setting forth the Buddha who exists not in time and whose decease is not real, but who, filled with compassion for humanity, resorts to earthly semblance to come within reach of human sense and understanding; who embodies himself not in any 'muddy vesture of decay', but in the *Dharma* itself and who sits for ever ensconced on Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa.[31] The question,—Did the Lord have only eighty and odd years' duration of life?—is dealt with in both the

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 319: 'Tataḥ kulaputrā 'stathāgata upāyakauśalyena teṣāṁ satyānāṁ durlabhaprādurbhāvaḥ bhikṣave'.

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 318–319: 'Aparinirvṛta'stathāgataḥ parinirvanamādarśayati vainayavaśena'.

[28] See Lotus, p. 304.

[29] See *supra*, pp. 13–14.

[30] Sad, p. 324: 'Sadādhisṭhānaṁ mama etadīdṛśam'acittiyā kalpasahasrakotyaḥ; na ca cyvaṁi 'itu gṛdhrakūtād' nyāsu śayyāsana kotibhisca'.

[31] See Suv, pp. XVII–XIX, viz.,——

(*a*) 'Na Buddhaḥ parinirvāti na dharma parihīyate
Sattvānāṁ paripākāya parinirvāṇaṁ nidarśayet
Acintyo Bhagavān Buddho nityakāya'stathāgataḥ
Deseti vividhān vyūhān sattvānāṁ hitakaraṇāt'.

(*b*) 'Dharmakāyo hi sambuddho dharmadhātustathāgataḥ
Idṛśo bhagavatikāya īdṛśī dharmadeśanā'.

(*c*) "I always abide in the Mount of Vulture" (I-Tsing's Translation quoted in Suv. at p. XIX)

works,—in Ch. XV of the *Lotus* and Ch. II of the *Suvarṇa-prabhāsa*,—and on exactly similar lines.[32]

* * * * *

However trenchant and clear-cut the doctrinal and other differences between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna in the post-Kaniṣkan age, the two were bound up together in one system of thought at a preliminary formative stage. It was probably in the 1st century B.C. that Buddhism reached this stage, but it had been led up to since when (3rd century, B.C.) the Lord of the legends became transfigured as the Eternal Buddha in Buddhist faith. The emergent concept divested the holy legends of reality and re-invested them with a fresh, a largely symbolical, meaning. Unreal in the human sense the legends had already become when the *stūpa*-decorators of the Asokan age took them up as art-motives.

Yet all religions are full of 'survivals', and two customs in Buddhism are distinct survivals from an earlier stratum, viz., pilgrimage and relic-worship. The first is based on the assumption of an earthly career for the Lord and the second, on the possession of a material body by him. These institutions continued in Buddhism as aids to *Bhakti*, bereft of their ancient memorial associations. To touch the soil the holy feet had trod or to worship a relic of the sacred body had not any sensible meaning when the legends of the Lord had been emptied of their original human significance. Yet Kaniṣka himself built a great reliquary mound near Peshawar,[33] and a consummate scholar and convinced Mahāyānist like Hsüan-tsang braved all the toils and perils of travel from end to end of India to acquire the spiritual benefit of pilgrimage.

[32] 'Tathāgatayus pramāṇa parivartaḥ' and 'Tathāgatāyus pramāṇa-nirdeśa-parivartaḥ' respectively.

[33] See Konow, p. lxxvii and pp. 135 ff.

Text page 239



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

AN ENGRAVED ARCH PRESENTING SYMBOLS ONLY AS OBJECTS OF WORSHIP (ARCH-CENTRE)

PLATE XXV

Text page 240

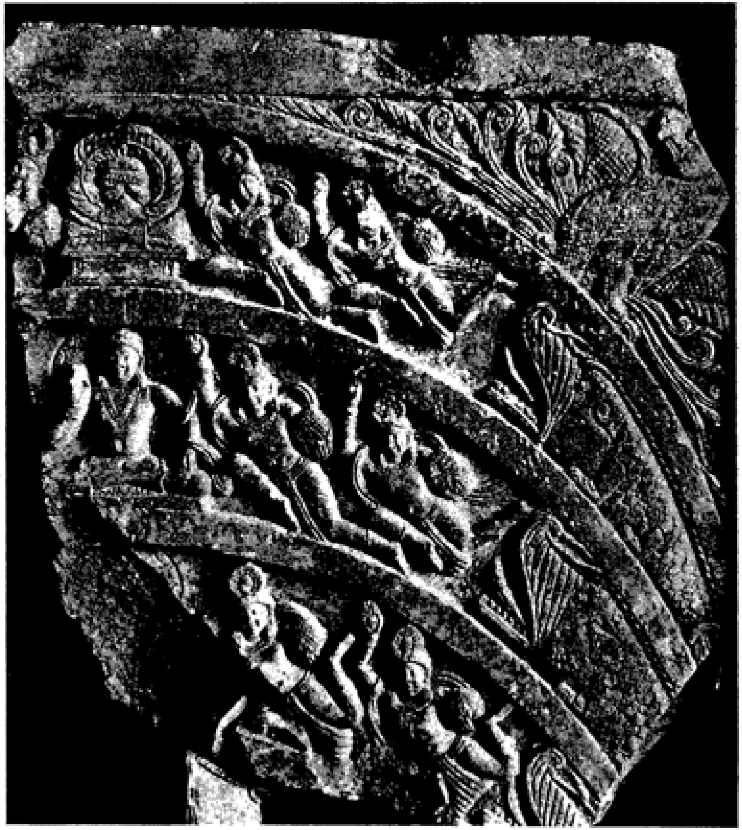


Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

THE IMAGE OF THE MAHĀPURISA BUDDHA HAILED BY CELESTIALS (*Middle Row*)

PLATE XXVI

Text page 240



Courtesy: Archæological Department, Government of India

A CORNER OF ANOTHER ARCH OF THE SAME ERA PRESENTING MAHĀPURISA BUDDHA-IMAGE ALONG WITH THE URN-SYMBOL

XVII

BHAKTI (DEVOTION) AND THE BUDDHA-IMAGE

It is easy to distinguish the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna by the test of their obvious differences in dogma and doctrine. But in Indian religious thought these differences have never had this crucial importance.[1] Perhaps the 'imponderables' played a more determining part in the transition of Buddhism to the Mahāyāna than formulated doctrine or dogma.

Whether the Buddhist devotee held faith in the Tathāgata of the old legends or the Buddha of developed doctrine, the essential matter was the spirit in which the object of faith or devotion was approached. It was here,—in the spirit of the religion,—that Buddhism in passing from the Hīnayāna to the Mahāyāna shows the vital, the really revolutionary change.

We have traced *Bhakti* in the old cult in its Threefold Refuge, in the worship of the 'Lord of Compassion', and in the invocation by prayer of his saving grace.[2] The spirit of worship and prayer, so rare and faint in the primitive Theravāda system, is abundantly articulated in the widely-prevalent

[1] Says Aurobindo Ghose: "To the Indian mind the least important part of religion is its dogma; the religious spirit matters, not the theological credo. On the contrary to the western mind a fixed intellectual belief is the most important part of a cult, its core of meaning, the thing that distinguishes it and makes it either a false or a true religion, according as it does or does not agree with credo of its critic. That notion is a necessary consequence of the western idea that intellectual truth is the highest verity. The Indian religious thinker believes on the contrary that all the highest eternal verities are truths of the spirit; intellectual truth turned towards the infinite must be not one, but many-sided; the most varying intellectual beliefs may be equally true because they mirror different facets,—form, however separated by intellectual distance, so many side-entrances which admit us into the precincts of the eternal verity" (*Fundamentals of Indian Culture*, Sri Aurobindo Library Inc., New York, 1953, p. 140. The quotation is slightly abridged).

[2] See section XIV on *Bhakti in the Cult*.

stūpa-worship of the Asokan age. The idea becomes somehow dominant, outside the Theravāda, that *Bhakti* is the devotee's cardinal virtue,—his one essential requisite for salvation.[3] This concept of *Bhakti* is taken over from the Hīnayāna into the Mahāyāna; it is stressed and developed in many forms in the Mahāyāna scriptures; it gives in fact the one unifying key-note to the vast mass of Mahāyāna literature to which not only India, but other countries of Asia have so variously contributed.

Bhakti, in the seed in Buddhism long before its efflorescence in the Mahāyāna, must have constantly demanded some token of the Lord that could be sensed, loved and cherished. The token was sought in the Asokan age in emblems and relics, but later on in something more directly tangible, more immediately evocative. For the emergence of the Buddha-image, there was indeed a psychological background in preparation over several centuries.

In a legend of the *Divyāvadāna*,[4] this background leaps to view in vivid clearness. Of this legend, the original version has been discovered in one of the works of Aśvaghoṣa (*circa* 1st century, A.D.) in Chinese translation,[5] and the origin of the legend itself may well be a century earlier. Its significance and importance, odd and fantastic as the legend is, can scarcely be overrated in relation to the origin of the Buddha-image in Buddhism.

* * * * *

The legend has a local background,—an ancient monastery which must have been famous in its time, built by two wealthy *śreṣṭhi* (merchant) brothers, named Nata and Bhata, on the top of a mountain known as the 'Ram's Head' (*Rurumuṇḍa*) near Mathura. A monk of great renown and holiness, named Upagupta, took up his residence in this monastery, and the legend grew that so great was his spell and power that he succeeded in converting even Māra, the

[3] e.g. Div., p. 360: 'Svalpā hi atra bhaktir 'bhavati matimatāṁ nirvāṇaphaladā'.

[4] The legend (No. XXVI) of Upagupta and Māra in Div., pp. 348 ff.

[5] See *Sanskrit Buddhism*, pp. 257–263.

Evil One, who haunted the locality in the guise of a magician and artist.

Māra is represented in the story as a consummate histrion and producer of *tableau vivant* and musical entertainments. By these shows and entertainments, he tried to draw away people who used to assemble at the 'Ram's Head' monastery in large numbers to listen to Upagupta's eloquent religious discourses. But against the charm of the great monk's holy personality, even the Evil One could not hold out long. He became a proselyte, and repenting of his old antagonism to the Buddha and promising to abjure his obstructionist tactics at Upagupta's sermons, Māra approached him for guidance.

Upaguta, being a believer in and apostle of *Bhakti*, told the Evil One that if he could cultivate a little *Bhakti* for the Lord, that would ensure his salvation (*nirvāṇa*).[6] Māra accepted Upagupta as his guide, became his most humble and obedient servant, and promised to carry out all his behests. What were the orders of the Master?—asked the newly-converted Māra in utter humility of spirit.

Then the thought occurred to Upagupta that he would utilize Māra's magic to call up a vision of the Lord's *Rūpa-kāya*, his embodiment in that form and figure in which he had last manifested himself to the world. "I became a monk a hundred years after the Great Decease of the Lord; I have seen the *Dharma-kāya* (the body of the Lord as made manifest in the Dharma).[7] But I have not seen the *Rūpa-kāya* of the Lord that must be like a mountain of gold". So Upagupta importuned Māra in the legend: "Show me the Image of the Buddha (*Buddha-vigraha*). Nothing is dearer to me than that; eager am I to see that Form clad in its 'ten powers' (*daśabala*)".[8]

Māra consents, but makes a stipulation that, when he would produce that divine form, Upagupta must not fall in worship before it, for the effect of such an act on his part would be to consume Māra in a flame. Upagupta agrees,

[6] See *supra*, p. 234, footnote 3.

[7] See *supra*, pp. 5, 229.

[8] Div., p. 360: 'Varṣaśataparinirvṛte Bhagavati pravrajita'stad-dharmakāyo mayā tasya dṛṣṭa; Trilokanāthasya kāñcanādrinibhas'tasya na dṛṣto rūpakāyo me; Tad'anudyam'anugraham' apratimam' iha vidarśaya Buddha-vigraham; Priyam'adhikam'ato hi nāsti; Dasabalarūpa-kutūhalo hy'aham'.

and Māra, retiring into the near-by forest, puts on a disguise of the Buddha and presents, by his magic powers, to Upagupta's eyes a sort of tableau, showing the Buddha with his prominent disciples, Ananda, Moggallāna, Kāśyapa and others by his side, all seated, while a hundred Bhikkhus sit below in a crescent row.

The incident described suggests that in the 2nd century, B.C., —if that may be taken as the period when the legend originated, —Buddhist 'mystery plays' had come into vogue and the personation of the Buddha was not uncommon. But the '*Buddha-vigraha*' that Upagupta demanded to see had in all likelihood not taken form in plastic art yet. It is suggested by the vagueness with which, in the passages that follow this incident, the Buddha-form (*Buddha-rūpa*), presented by Māra, is described by Upagupta. Only generalized and conventional epithets are taken to describe the form, like 'lovely to the eye' (*nayanābhirāma*), etc., with no allusion to the pose, the disposition of the fingers (*mudrā*), the protuberance on the head (*usñīśa*) or the hairy mole between the eyes (*ūrṇa*) or any other mark that distinguishes the Buddha of plastic art.

The vision moves Upagupta to such ecstasy that he forgets his promise for the moment, prostrates himself before Māra in the Buddha's semblance and, being reminded of his promise, assures Māra that it is not him he has worshipped, but the Buddha himself, 'in the same way as people worship the immortal gods in images of clay'.[9] *The spirit of image-worship has effloresced,—but without the image.*

* * * * *

The legend of Māra and Upagupta is most revealing of the urge that was growing perhaps for centuries in Buddhism and of the direction in which it was tending,—the evolution of a concrete object on which the *Bhakti* of the devotee could concentrate itself.

Mimetic art in this respect seems to have been the fore-runner of plastic. The legend itself points to the practice

[9] Div., p. 363 'Mṛṇmayīṣu prakṛtiṣu amarānāṁ yathā janāḥ Mṛtsaṅgāmanādṛtya namati amara-saṅgayā; Tathāham tvām'iha vīkṣya Lokanātha-vapur' dharam Marasaṅgām'nādṛtya gataḥ sugatasaṅgayā'.

of personating the Buddha. It is confirmed by a Tibetan legend, of uncertain antiquity, in which the story is told of an actor approaching five learned monks to supply him with materials for a 'Buddha play'.[10] The monks turn down the actor's request as impious, but the latter manages to get the necessary materials from a nun, pitches a booth in Rājagaha on the day of 'the festival of the Nāga-Rājās', and makes a large profit by a dramatic representation of the Buddha's 'Great Renunciation', according to the text of the *Abhiniṣkramaṇa Sūtra*.[11]

Even at an early stage of Buddhism, rudimentary efforts seem to have been made by the legend-maker's imagination at producing a form and figure of the Lord, —the form of a *Mahāpurisa*,—by assembling distinctive physiognomical signs. There seems to have been a pre-Buddhistic tradition about it. "There has been handed down in our *mantras*", it is stated in the *Ambaṭṭha Suttanta*, DN, "thirty-two bodily signs of a *Mahāpurisa*,—signs, which if a man has, he will become one of the two (either a Buddha or an Emperor, *Cakkavatti Rājā*) and no other"[12]. This physiognomic theory, said to be of ancient tradition, is found only in its Buddhist version in several legends where a set of thirty-two bodily marks are attributed to the Buddha as a *Mahāpurisa*[13]. One of these, most frequently and prominently reproduced in the Buddha images that appeared four or five centuries later, is the *Unhīso-sīso*, i.e., the head shaped in the cranial part as though it had a natural turban on. But the marks (*lakkhaṇas*) were never actually assembled in imagination to complete a form and figure, until late, in the 2nd century B.C., the Superman Buddha with the physiognomical marks appears in the sculpture of Mathura, as in the frieze shown.

There is no Buddhist legend of an early age in which we have an organized or full-length description of the Buddha as Superman. Had such a description existed, it might have conceivably broken the reticence of the Asokan artists.

[10] See *Tibetan Tales* by Schiefner and Ralston (Broadway Translations), No. XIII, p. 244.
[11] It is a version in Tibetan and Chinese of the life of the Buddha in 60 chapters. See Nanjio, No. 680.
[12] Dial, i, p. 110.
[13] e.g., Lakkhaṇa Sutta, DN; Mahāpadāna Suttanta, DN; Ambaṭṭha Suttanta, DN. See D–PTS under Lakkhaṇa, and Dial, i, p. 110.

But they neither had for their guidance the tradition of a Buddha-form in the scripture, nor were they free to evolve one out of their own imagination, for an inhibition, as we have seen, was created for them by the faith of the age. Yet the yearning for it betrays itself faintly, almost obscurely, in some of their delineations on the stones of Sānchi and Bārhut.[14]

Foucher's fascinating theory[15], viz., that the lack of the Buddha-form was supplied by some unknown Bactrian artist who took the Hellenistic type of Apollo as the prototype of the Buddha and added out of Greek tradition the halo and the Greek folds of drapery, has been for many years in the field, but not without a challenge.

The earliest Indian Buddha images emanate from two different schools of sculpture, western and eastern,—of Gāndhāra and of Mathura respectively. It is difficult to determine which was the earlier. In the Gāndhāra school, the Hellenistic characteristics are plain: the image is a composite one with the nimbate Apollo-like face, the posture of an Indian Yogin and the garb of a Buddhist monk gathered in Grecian folds. The influence of the school of Gāndhāra on that of Mathura is also all too evident,—the folds, completely un-Indian, of the drapery alone is an unmistakable indication. But the question on which issue has been joined by experts in Buddhist inconography is whether the undoubtedly 'Hellenisticized' Gāndhāran type of the Buddha-image was in fact original, or was only an already existing type transformed by a foreign art-tradition.[16] Whether Indian genius produced the Buddha-image or obtained it from Bactrian Greek, Buddhism received, at least four centuries after the Lord's decease, an image of him to fulfil the devotee's longing.

The '*Buddha-vigraha*', for which the soul of Upagupta in the *Divyāvadāna* legend had yearned,—a yearning that, in the actual absence of it, he had to satisfy with a fleeting illusion,—came to be installed in Buddhism. We have to wait to determine the venue of its origin for the happy accident

[14] See *supra*, p. 196.
[15] See *supra*, p. 194.
[16] See Coomaraswamy's *Origin of the Buddha Image*, pp. 37–38.

of an archæological find in future settling priority between the school of Gāndhāra and the school of Mathura.[17]

The Māra-Upagupta legend, as we have seen, originated at Mathura, and from the psychological background it so graphically presents, the Buddha-image was but a short step ahead.

APPENDIX to XVII

On Buddha-Pūjā: Worship of the Lord

We are in a position now to recapitulate the evolution of *Buddha-pūjā* in Buddhism.

Initially *Buddha-pūjā* is conceived (as in the *Dhammapada*, vide *supra*, pp. 201-202) as a purely mental act or attitude.

When, however, the *stūpa* is adopted in the cult as a remembrancer of the Lord, a rite accompanies the mental act,—the placing of 'garland or perfume or paint' ('*Mālaṁ vā gandhaṁ vā vannakaṁ vā āropessanti*'—MahaP., V, 26).

It develops into a regular ritual with chanting of lauds (*vandana*), offering of flowers and garlands, and burning of incense, as we find it described in the 'poetical manuals' of the Pali canon (*supra*, p. 202). At the same time the symbol is somehow felt to be inadequate for the plenary expression of *Bhakti*: there is a suppressed yearning in the devotee's heart for something more evocative, more sensibly visual of the Lord. It is tacitly suggested by the *stūpa* artist's crude attempts to evolve a figure out of the symbols (*supra*, p. 196): it finds fuller and freer expression in the Upagupta legend of the *Divyāvadāna* (*supra*, pp. 234 ff).

[17] In her work on *The Scythian Period* (Leiden, 1949) Leeuw presents some archæological data from which she concludes that the Buddha-image appeared at Mathura at least half a century, if not a whole century, earlier than at Gāndhāra. She endorses the opinion of Havell and Coomaraswamy that "the Buddha-image originated on Indian soil, conceived as a supply for Indian need" (p. 170). "When Coomaraswamy pleaded for the idea that Mathura had created the Buddha-image on its own initiative, he brought forward *inter alia* that the Bhakti-cult, which in those centuries became very prominent, demanded as it were a concrete image of the Master. Konow completely joined in with this" (p. 170). "In the first half of the 1st century, A.D. the custom gained ground at Mathura to represent the Master no longer in symbols but in human form (several sculptures do in fact show both ways of representing the Buddha) and the portrayal of the Buddha is determined by the tradition in the course of that period" (p. 171).

It was the urge of this yearning that resulted in the invention of an image of the Lord in human likeness which appears in the early sculpture of Mathura,—a seated image in stone in the form of a Yogin and Superman with the physiognomical marks on him for recognition .This was probably in the early part of the first century A.D.

But for a long time, even after the image had come into existence, the worship seems to have been a mixed one,—symbols like Tree and Mound placed along with the humanised image. This is shown on the engraved stones of Mathura.

Lastly, the composite nimbate figure, seated or standing, is devised (1st century A.D. ?) in the west and north-west of India by Indo-Hellenistic art. It influences and modifies at several points the Mathura images which it finally supersedes. The Indo-Hellenistic Buddha becomes standardised in Indian art and is taken over into other countries (Burma, Siam, Cambodia, China, etc.) where the foreign artists in reproducing it often add racial characteristics as well as those of their own art-modes.

XVIII

THE EMERGENCE OF THE MAHĀYĀNA

IN THE *Kathāvatthu*, a great literary landmark of the middle part of the Asokan age (270–50 B.C.), the Theravāda protagonist had treated the idea of 'innovation' in the *sāsana* as heretical, even fantastic.[1] Yet what emerged out of the welter of heresies and heterodoxies we have seen him combating was no new Sect or new School, but a Buddhism 'made new' (*navakata*).

The emergence of this neo-Buddhism is associated in tradition with a particular region, Gāndhāra, and a royal personage, Kaniṣka. It was some time after its emergence that it acquired a distinctive name for itself, *Mahāyāna* (translated as 'Great Vehicle').[2] It is not known even approximately when the name was actually invented or what its original significance was. An age later it is placed in contrast with the old cult for which a correlative name, *Hīnayāna* (translated as 'Small Vehicle'), is used.

The formative stage of this neo-Buddhism is obscure: its distinctive doctrines appear formulated in works much later in time,—not earlier perhaps than the second century, A.D.[3] In what subtle ways of speculative thinking these doctrines were arrived at is not always traceable. The concepts of the old cult remain in them, but changed like the foliage of primæval forest in the layers of a coal-mine,—the Bodhisattva,

[1] See *supra*, p. 219.

[2] In the compound, 'Mahāyāna', the meaning of the word, 'Yāna', is doubtful. It is rendered by western scholars as 'Vehicle' which is one of its current meanings. The root-verb means 'to go'. 'Yāna' may mean a path to go by as well as a vehicle to go in. In the *Awakening*, Aśvaghoṣa leaves 'Yāna' in the term, 'Mahāyāna', without interpretation, but expatiates on the triple significance of 'Mahā' and says that the greatness of this 'Yāna' consists in its 'quintessence', 'attributes' and 'activity' (Awakening, pp. 53–55, developed at pp. 95 ff.). The term, 'Mahāyāna', must have been current long before Aśvaghoṣa's own time.

[3] Perhaps Aśvaghoṣa's *Awakening* is earlier in date. But the earlier assignment of this work depends on the somewhat doubtful identification of the author with the poet of the *Buddha-caritam*.

the plural Buddhas, the Eternal Buddha, *Dhammatā*, the essential correlation between the Buddha and the Dhamma, the Buddha's transcendence over matter, etc. Such concepts in Mahāyānist thinking find new theoretic interpretations, acquire new connotations and are varied in relative emphasis. But lines of filiation and points of contact with the old betray themselves.

But the Mahāyāna is not just 'developed' Hīnayāna. It has a texture of new ideas, concepts and beliefs. These new elements of the Mahāyāna were not contributed by 'eastern Buddhism',—they did not emanate from the ancient Magadhan fountain-head of Buddhist culture.

Tradition points to a far-off milieu, to Gāndhāra, where Buddhism transformed itself by the accession of these new elements. It is no longer part of India, having merged centuries ago in the neighbouring country of Afghanistan. It had originally been Bactrian territory, but was ceded by the Syrian king Seleukos to Chandragupta by a treaty in the 4th century, B.C.[4] It is mentioned as a frontier State in one of Asoka's edicts[5]: perhaps it never became completely Indianised. To this frontier region Buddhist monks seem to have gone in gradual migrations after Asoka's reign, settling down in environments which were not, culturally speaking, like Magadha, purely Indian.

Gāndhāra has no recorded regional history like its neighbour Kashmir,[6] but the territory has yielded an extraordinarily rich collection of archæological finds which leave no doubt that, between Asoka and Kaniṣka, it must have risen to eminence as a seat of Buddhist culture. This culture was perhaps not purely or exclusively Indian: it has a curious smack of trans-Indian soil. From Gāndhāra, Bactria, where Asiatic Hellenism still flourished, spreading out filaments eastwards, was no farther off than Magadha, and most probably there was contact in this region of India between the Indian Buddhist culture and the Bactrian Hellenistic.

The contact had a tangible issue in the production of the early Buddha-images, conceived and fashioned in the tradition of

[4] See PHI, p. 221.

[5] In the Kaliṅga edict.

[6] The *Rāja-taraṅginī* (River of Kings), written by Kalhāna in the 12th century, A.D., is a history of ancient Kashmir.

Hellenistic art. But, side by side with the art-tradition, there were probably other traditions, less tangibly traceable. In the stream of those metaphysical developments, out of which the Mahāyāna emerged as a system, a sort of reconstructed and renovated Buddhism, some of the speculative philosophies of the Manichæans and the Neo-Platonists may have mingled and fused.[7] These western philosophies may have actually been the source of some of the new concepts of the Mahāyāna. The concept, for example, of *Prajñā* (Intuition) as expounded in the leading Mahāyānist scripture, *Prajñā-pāramitā*, has undoubtedly a distinct Neo-Platonic air, and Keith calls this Buddhist concept 'the twin sister of Sophia or Gnosis of Asiatic Greece'.[8]

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The question is mooted by Keith : "Is it possible to deduce the origin and development of the Mahāyāna from factors immanent in the Hīnayāna, or must we allow for the introduction of an element of influence of foreign thought on India ?"[9]

It opens a perspective little explored yet. The 'introduction of foreign thought', circumstantially so probable in a cultural milieu like Gāndhāra, is not evaluated yet in its quantum or degree. Its influence is indeed so completely assimilated in Mahāyānist system of thought that it is nearly impossible to distinguish it as extraneous. On the other hand, the 'factors immanent in the Hīnayāna' are outstanding. Some old Hīnayāna doctrines, e.g., the 'Four Aryan Truths'[10] and the 'Chain of Causation',[11] are taken over by the Mahāyāna ; several Mahāyāna doctrines like *Śūṇytā* (Nothingness), *Pāramitās* (Perfections) and *Dhammakāya* (The Lord's body made manifest in the religion),[12] seem foreshadowed in many canonical passages of the Hīnayāna ; some of the Hīnayāna

[7] It is suggested by Sylvain Levi in his edition and translation of *Mahāyāna-sūtrālamkāra* (Paris, 1907–11), ii, p. 16 ff. "Mahāyāna, at least as a definite system", says McGovern, "was undoubtedly the result of several centuries of philosophic development, probably in contact with alien influences" (Mahayana, pp. 122–123).

[8] *Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 216.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] See *supra*, p. 13.

[11] See *supra*, p. 40.

[12] See *supra*, p. 5.

Schools again (e.g., the *Sautrāntika*) show on their doctrinal side a near approach to the Mahāyāna.

But it is somewhat illusory after all to conceive of Buddhism in terms only of doctrine, dogma, theory and philosophy which were the business of schoolmen and clerics. These were spun out of scholastic learning; they find place in learned treatises and appear meretritiously important in the system of the religion.

There is another and a more vital aspect of the religion that speaks to us from the life of folk,—from folk art, folk faith and lay thought and practice. In a popular religion as Buddhism grew to be in the Asokan age doctrines and metaphysical speculations themselves could hardly have flourished quite apart from and irrespective of lay beliefs. A clear pointer in this direction is the canonization in this age of *stūpa*-worship by the Theravāda.[13] Fluid ideas and current faiths of common people perhaps took form and coherence from the hands of learned monks, reappearing as doctrines. A factor in the development of Buddhism might have been this kind of exchange between monk learning and lay mentality. We may legitimately suppose that, in the rise of many of the *Vādas* (Schools), the sole urge was not always the excogitation in monastic cloisters of points of *Vinaya* or *Abhidhamma*.

Perhaps it is specially true of the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism; it was the resultant of the inner forces in the religion, evolved by movements of both monk mind and lay mind; the metaphysical doctrinal developments came later with the *Mahāyānist Schools*.

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The Mahāyāna had an earlier 'Sūtra' period and a later 'School' period, though they run into each other,—the earlier 'Sūtras' receiving remoulding more or less from later scholastic developments. The chief criterion of the earlier is the absence in them of the contrast between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna as representing two different schools of thought and belief: this contrast and contra-distinction is brought into prominence in the 'School' period only.

[13] See *supra*, pp. 167 ff.

The underlying idea in the earlier *sūtras* is that new truths in the old legends have been discovered: perhaps it bespeaks itself in the very description of the new Buddhism as Mahāyāna.

'*Yāna*' is understood as 'vehicle' by later Mahāyānists, but when the name, *Mahāyāna* was first invented, the component '*Yāna*' may have been used as synonymous with the term, '*Magga*' (Path), by which in the old cult the religion is called.[14] Taking this meaning of Yāna, the name, *Mahāyāna*, would seem to suggest that the original idea was that the old *magga* or path had only been broadened: it had been narrow and strait, not possible for all to traverse, but it was now made wide enough for all. "Mahāyāna is nothing but a 'Broad Path' laid through the worlds of gods and men, wide as the sky,—hence called Mahāyāna".[15] "There is but one 'Path',—there is no second and assuredly no third".[16] The old idea of *Magga* (Path) is retained, and the new idea is, not that a new way has been struck out, but that the old one has been widened into a broad thoroughfare for all.

While this 'widening of the path' betokens the new idealism of Mahāyāna thought, the expression is just a metaphor for a freer and more catholic re-interpretation of the old.

In both the *Lalitavistara* and the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, we have already seen that the scriptures of early Buddhism and their Buddha-legends are not scrapped but re-interpreted in a new light, and the old doctrines are regarded as bearing a twofold significance, 'real' (*paramārtha*) and 'conventional' (*parikalpita*), which are distinguished.[17] The Mahāyāna beginning is marked by this conscious effort to evolve new values and fresh significances out of the old, for which there was an imperative inner necessity in the felt inconsistency between the old cult and the established Buddha-concept.

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[14] See instances of the use of the word, 'Yāna' and its feminine 'Yānī' cited in S–E. Dict under *Yāna* (e.g., *Pitṛyāna* meaning 'the path leading to the *Pitṛs*') in the sense of Path. See also Mrs. Rhys Davids' *Outlines*, pp. 194–195.

[15] See *Aṣṭa-sāhasrika-prajñā-pāramitā* (Bibliotheca Indica, Ed., p. 24).

[16] *Sad* (*Lotus*, p. 6):
'Mahāyānaṁ mahāyānamiti Bhagavānuccate sadevamanusasuralokamabhibhavan niryāsyati prakāśasamatayā atimahattayā taṃ Mahāyānam'.
'Ekam hi yānaṁ dvitīyaṁ na vidyate
Tṛtīyam naivāsti kadāci loke'.

[17] See AMB, pp. 205–238.

There are prophetic sayings on scriptural record in Christianity and other religions, and a like prophecy, recorded in its early scripture and carried on by tradition into later ages, existed in Buddhism too. *It was to the effect that 'the good* Dhamma *would stand fast only for five hundred years'.* Some misogynist monk, who believed that women should not have been admitted to ordination, perhaps edited this prophetic saw, ascribing the dire result to the institution of nunhood. It is in this edited form that it is put in a legend in the mouth of the Lord.[18] But in a sense this prophecy in the scripture came to be fulfilled, for it was in the course of five following centuries that the religion of the Lord completely outgrew its old cult, and the *Sāsana*, to revert to the phrase of the *Kathāvatthu*, was by the Mahāyānist 'made new' (*navakata*). Only the Theravāda remained steadfast, forlornly true to the old, bearing now the disparaging *sobriquet* of Hīnayāna.

The rise of the renovated cult is associated in tradition with the holding of a great 'Council' by the Indo-Scythian emperor Kaniṣka. It is difficult to fix the supposed event chronologically, for the date of Kaniṣka himself still remains one of the vexed problems of Indian chronology.[19] Expert opinion varies between the 1st century, A.D. and the 2nd, but the Greek inscriptions on Kaniṣka's coins seem to point to the earlier.

The tradition about the 'Council' held by him is recorded several centuries later by Hsüan-tsang who says that Kaniṣka, who was a pious Buddhist, found the views of different schools so contradictory that he summoned a council (where, the pilgrim does not say) to re-arrange the three *piṭakas*. But we are told, not that the *piṭakas* were actually re-arranged, but that the 'Council' concerned itself mainly with the composition of commentaries on them. These commentarial works were then engraved on sheets of copper and were

[18] Culla, X, I, 6. Also Milinda, IV, 1, 55–61 where, significantly, the relation of the prophecy to the institution of nunhood is ignored. This scriptural prophecy became traditional in Buddhism and, as centuries passed without Buddhism being extinct in India, the original limit of 500 years was conveniently extended in later Mahāyāna texts. Thus 500 years grew into 5,000 (see Buston, p. 103). See, for these later versions of the ancient prophecy, pp. 102–108 of Buston (IV. *The Time of Existence of the Doctrine*).

[19] A review of the whole controversy regarding the date of Kaniṣka is given by Leeuw in whose opinion Kaniṣka "began to reign shortly after A.D. 71" (see *The Scythian Period*, Ch. I on *The Eras*).

enclosed in a *stūpa* with the scripture in the centre,[20]—a proceeding, by the way, which looks like an incipient form of 'book-worship' that developed later in Buddhism.[21]

The tradition Hsüan-tsang records does not tell us from which school of Buddhism the scripture, on which the commentaries were composed, was derived. But in 1909 a *stūpa*, built by Kaniṣka and visited by both Fa-hsien in the fifth century, A.D., and Hsüan-tsang in the seventh, yielded on excavation a relic-casket with a short dedicatory inscription on it in the Kharoṣṭhī script which read: 'For the acceptance of the masters of the Sarvāstivāda School' (*Ācariyānaṁ sarvāstivādināṁ parigahe*).[22] It is plausibly inferred from the inscription that this was the school that the emperor favoured and that the scripture, said to have been centrally enshrined, which, however, has not been discovered yet, belonged to that school.

There is an earlier record of the tradition of this 'council' made by Paramārtha, an Indian monk who settled in China,[23] but it does not explicitly connect the 'council' with Kaniṣka. We are told of an Arhat monk, named Kātyāyanīputra, of the Sarvāstivāda school, who held, 'about five hundred years after the Buddha's death', a council where the scriptures were rearranged and put into literary form by Aśvaghoṣa and new commentaries thereon were also composed. Thereafter the convener of the council made a proclamation that the works, thus settled, must not be taken out of Kashmir (Kipin) and the proclamation had the king's ratification.[24]

Different versions of the tradition about a rearrangement and fresh edition of the canon, together with the composition of a new body of commentary thereon, in Kaniṣka's reign or 'five centuries after the Lord's decease', agree in regarding the Sarvāstivāda scripture as fundamental.

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Some of the scriptures of an allied school, called the *Mūla-Sarvāstivāda*, have been discovered in Kashmir and edited,[25]

[20] Beal, Vol. I, pp. 151 ff.
[21] See *supra*, p. 193, footnote, 37.
[22] Konow, p. 137.
[23] See *supra*, p. 139, footnote, 55.
[24] Eliot, Vol. II, pp. 78–80.
[25] Gilgit MSS, edited by N. Dutt.

but the 'Sarvāstivāda' in Kaniṣka's inscription might have had a different set of scriptures. Except the epic, *Lalitavistara*, and some fragments discovered far away from India in eastern Turkestan,[26] the original scriptures of the Sarvāstivāda school are lost. There exist, however, a few Chinese translations which have been listed by Nanjio,[27] and Hsüan-tsang himself is said to have translated 67 books of the Sarvāstivāda school out of the total of 657 works translated by him. These translations are unexplored yet. Of the doctrines of this school, only a few are known from their identification by the commentator on the *Kathāvatthu* among 'heresies' noted in the work.[28] On the Buddhology of the school, however, the *Lalitavistara* by itself throws ample light: its Buddha-concept was widely different, as we have seen, from that of the Theravāda[29]: it was purely docetic.

Docetic from its very start was also the Mahāsanghika school, perhaps more ancient in its origin than the Sarvāstivāda. Its canon, of which a complete transcript is said to have been taken away by Fa-hsien from Pāṭaliputra to China in the early part of the fifth century, A.D. and translated into Chinese[30] is not available in the original. The solitary survival is the *Mahāvastu*, made by one of the Mahāsanghika sects. But, again, a number of doctrines of this school is identified by the *Kathāvatthu* commentator. They are clearly docetic in character, showing a strong affinity to the developed doctrines of the Mahāyāna.[31]

* * * * *

There is little doubt that the Mahāyāna was the last term of a long course of evolution, starting from the docetic or semi-docetic Buddha-concepts which had appeared very

[26] See Hœrnle's *Remains*, pp. 166–167: "Tradition asserts that the Buddhist school of the Mūla-sarvāstivādins, who traced their origin back to Rāhula, the son of the Master, used Sanskrit as the language of their holy scriptures. Until recently, this Sanskrit canon seemed to have been lost, but the archæological exploration in Central Asia has shown that this is not the case". Hœrnle seems to make no distinction between Sarvāstivāda and Mūla-Sarvāstivāda.

[27] See *supra*, p. 137.

[28] P. of C., p. XIX.

[29] See *supra*, pp. 225 ff.

[30] Takakusu, p. XX.

[31] P. of C., p. XIX.

early in Buddhist faith and are presented in the scriptures of different schools. We may trace the inchoate beginnings of these Buddha-concepts as far back, in all likelihood, as the fourth century, B.C. Between the stage of Buddhism when the Buddha-legends, preserved in their primitive form in the Theravāda canon, were first made, and the stage represented by the earliest Mahāyāna *sūtras*, in which the Mahāyāna is not contra-distinguished from the Hīnayāna yet and the doctrine of the Lord's ' threefold body ' not developed, —there is actually a gulf of nearly five centuries, the period delimited in the scriptural prophecy.

During these five centuries, Buddhism could not possibly have remained static. Its progressive development towards the Mahāyāna is marked externally on the one hand by proliferation of schools and sects and internally on the other by the steady growth of *Bhakti* in the religion. Cross-currents of influence from other Indian faiths and philosophies and even perhaps from trans-Indian sources are circumstantially probable, though they are so completely fused and assimilated in the religion that it is not possible to trace them as extraneous or distinct.

After the third century, A.D., some learned Buddhist scholars, realizing that Buddhism no longer presented a unitary system of thought and doctrine, turned to the exposition of the doctrinal differences among the schools.[32] A passing reference has been made to the treatises which exist only in Chinese and Tibetan translations.[33] We have seen how the accounts they give of the rise of the schools

[32] Perhaps the earliest treatise is by Vasumitra, extant in three Chinese translations, the first one made under the Chin dynasties (A.D. 351–431). An English translation of a later Chinese translation (by Hsüan-tsang) has been made by Masuda in *Journal, C.U.*, 1920. The sources of information regarding Buddhist sects and schools are tabulated by Kimura in a contribution, entitled *Introduction to the History of Early Buddhist Schools*, to Vol. III, pt. 3 of *Ashutosh Mukerji Silver Jubilee Volumes* (Calcutta University, 1927). According to Kamura, there are 6 Chinese (3 by Vasumitra), 5 Tibetan and 7 Pali works on sects and schools. The reconstructed titles of some Chinese and Tibetan works are as follows :—

(i) *Nikāya-bheda-vibhaṅga-vyākhyāna* (Exposition of the sectional differences in the scriptures) by Bhavya.
(ii) *Samaya-bheda-pracaraṇa-cakra* (Treatise on the Divisions in the Law) by Vasumitra.
(iii) ' A Compilation teaching the Differences of the Schools ' by Vinītadeva based on Vasumitra's work.

[33] See *supra*, p. 137.

does not square with the earlier account in the fifth chapter of the *Dīpavaṁsa*. They all hark back to traditions heavily obscured by time. All these accounts from the *Dīpavaṁsa* downwards were composed at wide intervals of time during which some schools became extinct, several sects perhaps coalesced and the doctrines themselves underwent large fluctuation and also development. The interaction and mutual influence of these schools must have been an important factor in the inner development of Buddhism, but it is an x-factor, yet to be brought into historical equation.

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An interesting common feature of all these traditional accounts of Buddhist schools, however divergent in their contents, is the reference to the settlement of doctrinal differences by 'Councils' convened for the purpose. The accounts of the first two so-called 'Councils' in the canon, as we have seen, are very much garbled, and the name, 'council', is hardly appropriate for the two occasions described, the first of which was probably a conference of monks held some time after the Lord's decease, and second, of a much later date, only a settlement of dispute among a body of monks in prescribed canonical form.[34] But there are three more 'councils' in traditionary legend,—one held at Pāṭaliputra 137 years after the Lord's decease during the reign of Padma and Mahāpadma in order to settle the 'Five Points' raised by Mahādeva[35]; another, more famous, held also at Pātaliputra during the reign of Asoka, described in the Ceylonese chronicles; and lastly, the council held by Kaniṣka which is first mentioned by Hsüan-tsang. *The historicity of none of these 'councils' is established*, but the reason why traditions of these 'councils' grew up is patent in the Buddhist *Vinaya*.

To settle a difference on a point of doctrine or practice by convening an assembly of monks was, as we have seen, an ancient institution of Buddhism, dating back to the primitive times when the Buddhist monks had first settled down to

[34] See *supra*, pp. 102 ff.
[35] See JRAS, 1910, p. 414—Poussin on *The Five Points of Mahādeva*. For the Tibetan version of this 'council', see Buston, p. 96.

congregational life and society in the *āvāsas*.[36] Whenever, therefore, tradition has to relate a schismatic movement involving acceptance or rejection of set rules or hitherto established doctrines and the growth of a *vāda* or school, the ancient institution is appealed to. An occasion,—an assembly convened for the purpose,—is spoken of, because the *Vinaya* rule requires the settlement of such disputes by a *Sanghakamma*, and the rule is supposed to have been somehow satisfied, whether such a supposition has or has not actual historical basis. The so-called council of Kaniṣka is, therefore, as doubtful historically as the earlier council of Asoka, and it is not unlikely that the tradition of the Asokan council gave rise to that of Kaniṣka's.[37]

Emperor Asoka, as his edicts show, knew something of the contents of the *Dhammapada* and some of the *Suttas* and *Vinaya* rules.[38] He had a few contacts with monks and some acquaintance with the scripture. We are not in a position to say even this much of Kaniṣka with any degree of certainty. He was no doubt a patron of Buddhism, like his Magadhan predecessor, but does not seem to have been like him a convinced or ardent Buddhist. Many of the coins of Kaniṣka have been unearthed, and on these coins effigies of Greek, Persian and Brāhmaṇical deities are severally found as well as those of the Buddha.[39] The coins bearing the Buddha-image show on the obverse the full-length figure of the Emperor in beard and moustache and the loose-flowing Scythian robe, with inscription of his full imperial title: on the reverse the Buddha, either seated or standing, with a Greek inscription along the edge, 'Go (tama) Bodo' for the seated figure and 'Boddo' for the standing one with nimbate face[40]. The crudity of the engraving is remarkable. It is difficult to say how much the emperor was posted or even interested in the scripture of the religion.

[36] For settlement of a dispute on doctrine (*vivādādhikaraṇa*) by a Sanghakamma, see *supra*, pp. 113–114.

[37] It is somewhat suggestive that in the historical section of *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (circa A.D. 800) there is no allusion to Kaniṣka's 'council' in the account of Kaniṣka (under the name of Turuṣka). See Imp. Hist., p. 23.

[38] See *supra*, p. 154.

[39] See Smith, p. 281.

[40] See Coomarswamy's *Origin of the Buddha Image*, p. 6 (Figs. 10, 11 and 12). Also BBA, PL. XIV (II d).

But, if his interest in Buddhism really led him, as Hsüan-tsang says, to look into the Buddhist scripture and have it explained to him, he must have found Buddhism widely different from what Asoka had found it to be. By the time of Kaniṣka, the religion had become more or less scholastic, involved in a developed system of metaphysical and philosophic thought, with a ritualistic side predominant in it. The simplicity of the old living faith and the earnestness of the old organization of the Order had passed away beyond recall.

Yet this neo-Buddhism, with its scholastic bias and its metaphysical subtlety, never quite replaced the old Buddhism with its simpler faith and its more popular appeal. Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna remained in India side by side,[41] and in the monastic universities of a much later age like Nālandā and Vikramaśilā, were studied and developed together.

That was the state of affairs in the Buddhist world of India that the Chinese pilgrims found. "Some writers", remarks Eliot, "speak as if, after our era, Mahāyānism was predominant in India and Hīnayāna banished to its extreme confines such as Ceylon and Kashmir. Yet about A.D. 640, the zealous Mahāyānist (Hsüan-tsang) states that half the monks of India were definitely Hīnayānist, while less than a fifth had equally definite Mahāyānist convictions".[42]

[41] There is a Tibetan tradition recorded by Buston that at the 'Council' of Kaniṣka, "after a recitation (of the texts) had been made, it was settled that the texts acknowledged by the 18 sects were all of them the Word of the Buddha" (Buston, p. 97).

[42] Eliot, Vol. II, p. 101.

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